

External lighting for Gardens and Businesses: effects on wildlife

Night-time lighting either from security lights or decorative garden lighting illuminate our garden spaces after dark, but what about the effects on wildlife?

Quick facts

- **The breeding success of glow worms is adversely affected by artificial lighting**
- Bats show disrupted feeding patterns in lit areas
- **Robins extend their activity period in artificial light, feeding longer and singing in the middle of the night**
- Moths and nocturnal-flying migrating birds can be disorientated by light sources and urban areas

The potential effects of artificial light at night on wildlife and the environment is often overlooked. Light pollution from inappropriately positioned security lighting is often the worst culprit but evidence suggests all forms of artificial lighting (including LEDs and halogen) can impact on wildlife.

What gardeners can do to minimize impact

Since artificial light in gardens disrupt natural behaviour for a range of wildlife it's important to retain some dark areas and also question whether you really need lighting. The trend for lighting up gardens as an extension of our living space may seem an inviting one but needs to be done with great care.

Tips for reducing impact

- Position lights as low as possible and aim them downwards or to where they're needed. When angling lights make sure you think about how it impacts on your neighbours too (such as not glaring right into their windows) and always position them considerately
- Fit hoods over the light to reduce light pollution of the night sky
- Turn garden lights off when not in use or use PIR motion sensors or timers for essential or security lighting so they only come on when absolutely necessary
- Choose low-intensity lighting and warmer hues (warm white, yellow or amber): solar lighting is cheap, safe and emits a dull glow suitable for garden use.