

Cover Story

5/30/2025

Bringing Light to the Garden

Jennifer Polanz



Outdoor lighting is an interesting subsection of the outdoor living constellation of products. Historically, there have been high-end (read: very expensive) products available for the luxury market, or on the flip side very low-end (read: cheap) products that often don't last or offer weak lighting. There wasn't a whole lot in between, but lately there have been introductions to fill that gap in the middle, providing independent retailers more opportunity to dive further into the lighting segment.

Alfresco Home introduced a variety of outdoor lighting options last June and plan to add another eight to 10 SKUs this summer.

What's Trending

Outdoor lighting in general is having a bit of a moment, as highlighted in last year's International Casual Furnishings Association's (ICFA) 2024 Outdoor Trend Report. Of the consumers surveyed, 45% said lighting is something they wanted for their outdoor spaces. And Martha Stewart's 7 Outdoor Living Trends for 2025 listed smart technology for products like outdoor lighting as a trend. It's an easy thing to add without either breaking the bank or making a big project out of it.

I asked Jamey Allsop, co-founder of Allsop Home & Garden, what trends she's seeing—they offer a variety of lighting options.

"Market interest over the past few years in the outdoor lighting market continues to be steady," she said. "A variety of new types of lighting categories have been introduced over the past few years leading to growth in the category."

One in particular she's excited about is the portable/rechargeable lighting category, which she feels is the largest growth sector.

"From my perspective, this is because these types of lights can be used both indoors or outdoors," she added. "They are often recharged indoors, but then brought outdoor to complement a beautiful evening on the patio or in the garden."

They introduced hand-blown glass rechargeable lanterns a couple of years ago, as well as durable plastic rechargeable portable lanterns to complement their existing lines of heavy duty Tyvek and metal solar lanterns.

“People buy lanterns for their own use, but we also see them purchased regularly as gifts,” Jamey added.



It's that multi-use option that helps retailers sell the product, too. I talked to Joseph Cilio, CEO and President of Alfresco Home, about their new line of LED indoor/outdoor lighting, which they introduced last June to complement the wide range of outdoor furniture and accessories they've sold for decades to independent retailers. The line, called Everglow, currently has 36 SKUs, with other eight to 10 to be added soon.

“The product has been manufactured for a number of years and sold in other parts of the world, but we had

an opportunity to bring this into the marketplace for the U.S. exclusively,” he said of the line, which is made in Europe. “It's designed to be completely used outdoors in all weather conditions all year long. It can also be used indoors, of course, but we are in the outdoor living business, so that's where we're headed.”

Allsop Home & Garden added hand-blown glass lantern products to its lineup to complement its heavy-duty solar lanterns. It also offers string lights and stands.

All the products are either solar or rechargeable, and they selected this manufacturing partner because of the quality of the products, many of which feature natural materials like bamboo and rattan. The tabletop products are popular and the rechargeable ones have a USB port to recharge them.

“The brilliance of the light itself is way different than you can find in a lot of places. There's three levels of lighting in each bulb and they can be operated by remote control,” he added. “So there's features within our lighting package that make it specifically user-friendly and easy. Sometimes you don't need it too bright—it can act as a mood light outdoors. I mean it gives you really wonderful options and some of it's RGB, which means you can change the colors of the lights.”

Differentiating from Others

Carrying high-quality products, of course, helps to differentiate from box stores and online retailers. Jamey said they recognize retailers are looking for opportunities.

“Consumers shop independent garden centers to find a curated, unique assortment of products, which drives repeat purchasing,” she said. “Now it's harder than ever not to let purchasing be predominantly dictated by price, but if garden centers want to maintain a repeat customer, uniqueness, quality and value are important.”

She added they've seen retailers pre-design a merchandising plan for their stores before buying products like outdoor lighting, leading to a beautiful and unique assortment at retail.



"Sometimes buyers will refresh the concept seasonally and slot certain colors or items in based on the seasonal theme," she said. "This means buying smaller amounts, but more frequently."

Showing the products outside of their packaging at retail allows customers to interact more with the lights.

Joseph said the merchandising was key to selling the lighting and recommended having samples that were lit up, as well as product displayed in their packaging (they offer a display stand, too). Giving customers the opportunity to see the luminosity and even play with the remote to look at the different colors can go a long way to making them feel more comfortable with their purchase.

What's Next?

Joseph said they already have one lighting product that doubles as a Bluetooth speaker, and he said more products are coming that will offer other benefits, including one that will be a beverage cooler, radio and light all in one. They'll continue to develop products that don't have a cord, too, focusing on the rechargeable and solar options.

Meanwhile at Allsop, they continue to expand their LED portable lighting options, as well as introduce new additions to their durable outdoor solar lanterns lineup. They also have a line of string lights and stands to illuminate patios, decks, porches and other outdoor spaces.

Jamey said they continue to see consumers expand where they use lighting outdoors, too.

"What was once consumers buying predominantly solar or landscape lighting to highlight certain sections of the garden has now expanded into other categories like more permanent installations of string lights, lighting for the fire pit or stocking portable/rechargeable pieces for a variety of uses both inside and outside the home," she said.

The future, while bright, may dim a little when it comes to availability and pricing thanks to uncertainty with current and potential future tariffs. The impact on supply chains for products like these, Jamey noted, would likely push prices up for manufacturers, retailers and the end consumer.

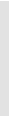
"It is our opinion that price increases will cause the consumer to buy less ... but when they do buy, they will be more discerning in their spending and look for quality over quantity," she added.



Natural Light

If customers are looking for ways to illuminate their patios and decks in other ways, I found a couple more companies with options while at Atlanta Market. One is Pottery Patch with an extensive line of chimineas. They have a variety of sizes, shapes and designs, with some specific to holidays. Many come with the chiminea and a base.

For a more modern design, O.W. Lee introduced last year the 42-in. round Capri chat height fire pit with summit gray tile and graphite finish. This intro joined a large collection of fire pits and outdoor decor offered by the company.



Alfresco Home also offers a variety of fire tables and fire pits, as well as chimineas.