

Let There Be Light

Great opening line. But, as our parents taught us, we can have too much of a good thing. And that's true, even of light.

Astronomers built the great telescopes on the tops of mountains for two reasons. The altitude meant less atmosphere to absorb or distort the light of the stars. The remoteness meant that the lights of cities wouldn't overwhelm the faint light from vast distances. Go out on a clear night, look at the sky and ask yourself if you can see even a fraction of the number of stars you could see ten or twenty years ago.

Astronomy isn't the only victim of our urge to turn night into day. Our outdoor lighting affects the wildlife around us. It affects the mating habits of species as diverse as frogs, fish and fireflies, and the behavior of birds and bats. It can disturb our neighbors, and can endanger drivers if lights at the end of our driveways produce glare, or can be mistaken for approaching headlights. A whole vocabulary has arisen around these issues, including key terms like:

- **LIGHT TRESPASS** — Light projected onto the property of another or into the public right-of-way when it is not required or permitted to do so.
- **LIGHT POLLUTION** — Any adverse effect of man-made light including but not limited to glare, light trespass, skyglow, visual clutter, wasted energy due to excessive or unnecessary lighting, or any man-made light that unnecessarily diminishes the ability

to view the night sky or is disruptive to flora and fauna.

- **ECOLOGICAL LIGHT POLLUTION** — Specifically, the effects of artificial light which disrupt foraging, reproduction, communication and other critical behaviors.

We use outdoor lighting to make entering and leaving our homes simple and safe. We use it to light recreation areas, for security, and to illuminate pieces of art and specimen plantings. As an aside, many insects are attracted to lights and will nest and feed near them, so we end up inviting them, their friends, and their predators to our homes, which probably wasn't part of the plan.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

We in Pound Ridge can't eliminate the problems of light pollution, and neighboring light sources aren't going to suddenly change their ways to restore the night skies to what they were. But we can set an example for other communities. In doing so, we can help preserve the environment, reduce carbon footprint, reduce pollution and save money, all at the same time.

The lights we use to illuminate driveways and pathways can be shielded to direct light downward. The areas which are important to light will be well lit. If replacing existing lighting isn't an option, consider adding shields to existing fixtures to ensure that light is not directed into your neighbor's property or the night sky. Glare, which is irritating and even dangerous, can be reduced by using frosted glass to diffuse the light.

At some point, it makes sense just to turn lights off. There isn't any need to light

the driveway, the path, or the entrance to the house when everyone has gone to bed, and no one is expected to visit. Security lighting may have to remain on for additional hours, but a review may show you're lighting more area than you really need to, and shielding can help to confine light to those areas. Decorative lighting can be turned off when you are inside, and not paying any attention to what's happening outside.

You can use timers to turn lights off at times when you normally don't need them. You can always override the timers for those occasions when you're returning late, expecting company, or entertaining outdoors.

Examples of types of lighting fixtures which shield light are shown on the next page.

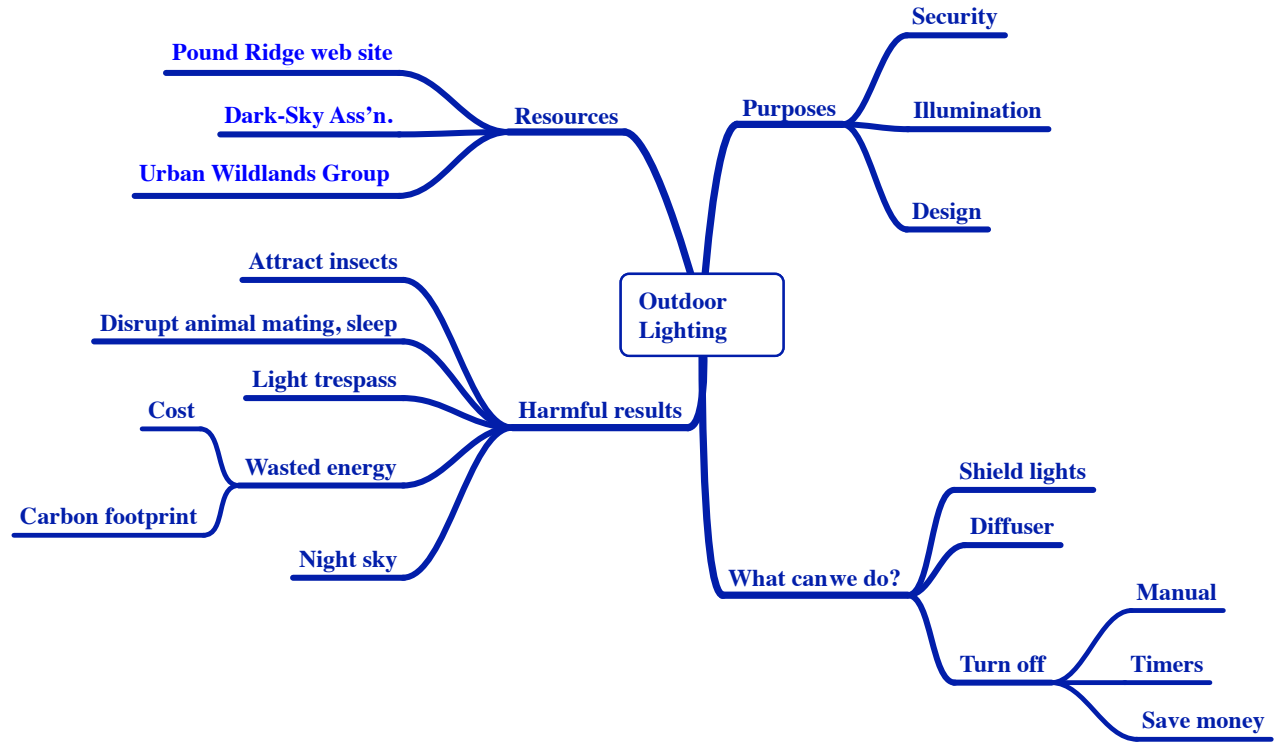
We need and use outdoor lighting for a variety of purposes. Light pollution is easier to remedy and manage than most other forms of pollution.

What we do as individuals can help, and can make us better neighbors and better caretakers of the environment for which we moved to Pound Ridge.

Please check the Conservation Board's page on the town's web site for additional information and resources on this and other topics at: <http://www.townofpoundridge.com/boardsandcommissions/conservation-board>

SHIELD DIFFUSE TURN OFF

Let There Be ^{a little LESS} Light



Shield
Diffuse
Turn Off

Examples of shielded light fixtures that shield the light source, minimize glare and light trespass, and facilitate better vision at night.

Extract from Good Lights for Good Nights presented by the Dark Sky Society. Illustrations rendered for the town of East Hampton, NY by Bob Crelin ©2/05