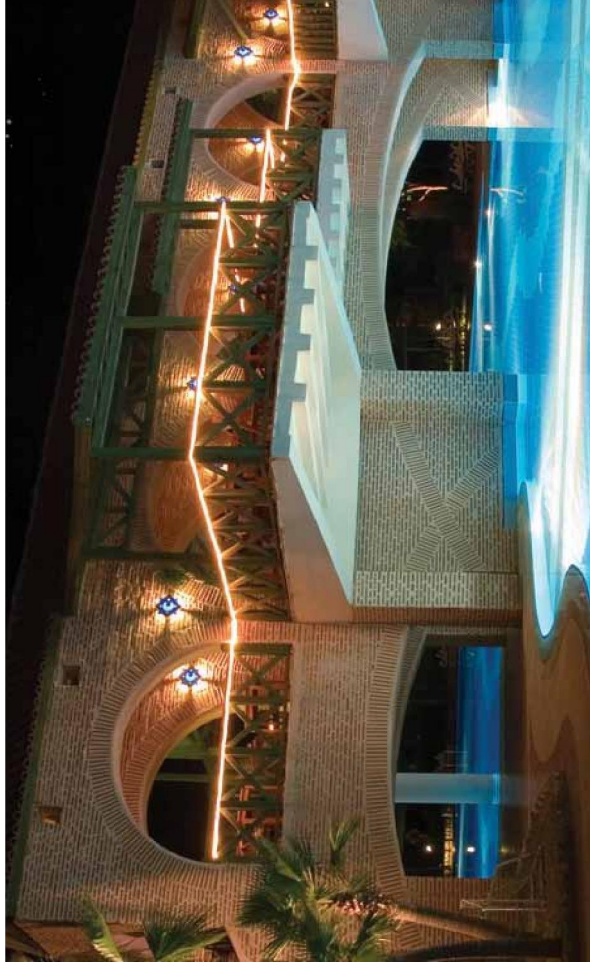


Today's Lighting: Illuminating Your Options



If you are looking for simple ways to update your home, focusing on lighting can do wonders and be very eco-friendly. Right now, light-source options include incandescent lights, compact fluorescents, halogens, and the newer LEDs (light-emitting diodes). Incandescent lighting is still the hallmark of a warmer, more yellow-toned light, if only because the perfect energy-conscious answer to incandescent lighting hasn't arrived yet. That's not to say that compact fluorescents, halogens, and LEDs are not making leaps and bounds in the industry.

Joey Martucci, President of LightLab Designs in Worcester, Massachusetts points out that over the years the use of lighting in home décor has undergone quite a transformation. In the 1980s, for instance, many home owners opted for fluorescents as a byproduct of a more decadent

age. In the 1990s, incandescent lights had a revival. Now, and for the past decade, fluorescents and compact fluorescents have seen great improvements along with an increase in popularity again, but fluorescent fans are now more attracted to the bulb's energy efficiency than sleek and modern look. When many people picture compact fluorescent lights, they envision a futuristic, twisted shaped bulb that emits a blinding white light. "Compact fluorescents have come a long way," counters Joey, "and what is best about them is that they mimic natural light quite well." He also notes that compact fluorescents can now be shaped like a normal light bulb. Recessed lighting has also offered advancements for compact fluorescents as the bulbs can be encapsulated in reflectors within the recessed light. With the evolution of the fluorescent light people enjoy a more energy-con-

scious light source without having to spare an inch on style.

But energy-savings improvements aren't limited to the inside of the house. LED lights – now very popular for outdoor lighting – provide a more dark sky compliant light to reduce the light pollution in the night sky. Joey sees this movement gaining greater popularity on Cape Cod. LEDs make an excellent solution for landscape lighting while halogens provide a nice light for textiles. Both work well for illuminating walkways, but Joey says that LEDs hold a distinct advantage in lifespan. LEDs last for approximately 50,000 hours as opposed to 10,000 hours with halogens.

That said, it is important to remember that there are pros and cons to each available light source. While the price of LED lights is coming

down and they offer more energy-efficient lighting than halogens, they cannot offer all of the different light colors that people would need or expect to fully integrate them into their homes. LEDs also emit a cooler light and therefore create a cooler feel to the light – appropriate for some modern office settings but at odds with a warm living room. Halogens bulbs provide a more energy efficient lighting solution than incandescent light and emit a warmer light than LEDs, but, as previously stated, neither LEDs nor halogens have perfected the warm light of incandescent lighting. For this reason, Joey doesn't advocate putting all of one type of light in the home but rather a mixture of light sources and fixtures.

When it comes to incorporating eco-friendly lighting into your home design, trying to take on a whole house

all at once can be overwhelming. "Start small by slowly incorporating energy-saving light bulbs into your home," instructs Joey. For decorative fixtures, incandescent lighting is still the best option. In other indoor areas it depends on the room and how the light will be used to highlight different areas. More generally speaking, LEDs make a good option for a laundry room or closet area or for use in reading lamps and task-oriented lighting.

At the very least look for Energy Star certified lighting and fixtures, all of which meet stricter energy-saving standards. The technology behind energy-saving light bulbs is still quite new and consumers need to know the outcome of the lighting before putting it into different areas of their home. "On an aesthetic level, when making a decision about what type of lighting to use, it is most important

to be cognizant of how each type of lighting will affect the surrounding area," states Joey. Take a subjective approach to decorating your home with energy-savings lighting; knowing that incandescent light provides a warmer feel and that compact fluorescents, LEDs, and halogens tend to be cooler, first test areas to make sure that the light is providing the right ambiance for the room. Let the room and setting dictate the lighting, and keep in mind that moderation is key. Although Thomas Edison's incandescent lighting provides a standard for warm light color, it won't be around forever, and the newer technology is worth giving a second look.

CLM ♦ By Rebekah Linga
Imagery courtesy of WAC Lighting