Choosing solar lights for your garden

➢ Why choose solar?

Solar lighting is powered by rechargeable batteries and needs no mains electricity, so you don't have to worry about messy wires causing trip hazards or blighting the view.

As they don't need to be within reach of a mains socket, they can be easily moved around the garden wherever and whenever you choose.

After the initial outlay, solar lights incur no running costs. Lights will turn on automatically at dusk and turn off at dawn, preserving battery life and making them completely maintenance-free.

➢ How do solar lights work?

All solar lights contain an internal rechargeable battery which is charged in daylight by the built-in solar panel. For the best performance, the panel should be positioned in direct sunlight.

The brighter the day, the more power is stored by the battery and the longer the light illuminates at night. Light is produced by one or more LEDs similar to those used in modern domestic light fittings and car headlights.

➢ What is a lumen?

The light output of solar lights is measured in lumens, the international standard unit of brightness. The higher the lumen count, the brighter the light.

Most decorative solar lights emit 1 lumen, but brighter lights (eg those used for security purposes) can produce as much as 1000 lumens.

➢ How bright are solar lights?

Standard solar lights emit an ambient glow ideal for lighting paths, borders, tables, etc, or creating decorative light effects. Super Bright solar spotlights produce intense targeted illumination more suited to security applications.

➢ How long do they light up for?

Solar lights will light up for as long as they have power in the battery. Batteries are long lasting, but will eventually need replacing after a couple of years or so.

Lights tend to work more effectively in the summer months when sunlight is at its most intense and days are longest (April-September).

After a good sunny day, solar lights will typically provide 6-8 hours of illumination at night. On a more variable day it will be around 4-6 hours, and in winter it will be reduced to 2 hours.

Motion activated or PIR sensor lighting, however, can work just as well in winter as in summer, as it only lights up in short bursts (usually 30 seconds at a time).

➢ Which light should I buy?

This depends on what you plan to use your lights for. Broadly, solar lights can be divided into functional or decorative, though many will be a combination of both.

Functional lights are designed to illuminate specific areas like edges, paths and garden features, or to provide extra security. Examples include marker stakes, crackle ball stakes, spotlights and motion-activated/PIR sensor lights.

Decorative lights are primarily for creating atmosphere and include string lights, ornamental stake lights, lanterns and novelty wall lights.

You'll find a wide range of both kinds in our solar lighting section, with white light and multicoloured options and various styles to suit all gardens.