

## Eco-Friendly Outdoor Lamps

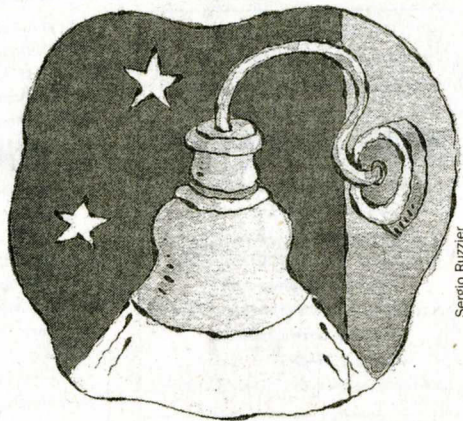
**H**ERE'S A BRIGHT IDEA: a light that shines a little darker.

That's the counterintuitive claim of an emerging category of outdoor-lighting products that homeowners are using to illuminate their yards, landscaping and patios.

"Dark sky" lamps, as they are called, are outdoor fixtures that cast most of their illumination downward, reducing the amount of excess spill light sent into the night sky (as well as the neighbors' property). The fixtures are touted by community advocates and wildlife researchers, who say that overly lighted commercial sites, residential properties and streetscapes not only waste energy but produce light pollution that obscures views of the heavens and endangers coastal wildlife.

The lights make up a tiny, but growing, share of the \$2 billion outdoor-lighting market. Lamps Plus, of Chatsworth, Calif., with 47 stores in the Western U.S., now carries 15 different models on its Web site, lampsplus.com, out of a total of 1,232 outdoor fixtures, including a modernist rectangular titanium design from

Hinkley Lighting for \$244.99 and a rust-finish lamppost style for \$94.91 from Minka Group. The company is adding 30 more to its line next month. Home Depot, which started marketing dark-sky fixtures in its Southern stores last December, expanded its offering nationwide this spring and now sells two



Sergio Ruzzier

lamps that have been approved by the International Dark Sky Association ([darksky.org](http://darksky.org)), a Tucson, Ariz., non-profit group that runs a voluntary certification process for the lighting industry. The IDA has approved more than 800 fixtures since its program started two years ago.

Hundreds of municipalities and subdivisions have passed anti-light-pollution regulations, says Robert Gent, vice president of the IDA. Compliant cities include Boulder, Colo., and Phoenix, which is near several large telescopes where light pollution can hinder astronomical research. It also poses environmental problems, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and has been linked to the death of thousands of sea-turtle hatchlings, which confusedly crawl toward brightly lighted beach property and into harm's way, rather than into the ocean.

Diane Simpkins of Shreveport, La., didn't know anything about light pollution when she bought six shaded lamps for her front yard; she just liked the look of them. But she was pleasantly surprised that their relative dimness actually made her greenery more attractive. Because of their narrower beams of light, dark-sky fixtures produce a more subtle, theatrical effect on bushes, flower beds and trees, unlike strong floodlights that brighten an entire yard. "It softens the look of my shrubbery," Ms. Simpkins, 60 years old, says.

Still, the lamps have their limits, especially for people with fading eyesight. And they're too dim for Ms. Simpkins to use on her sun porch, where she likes to read at night. "I'd strain my eyes," she says. —Christina S.N. Lewis

