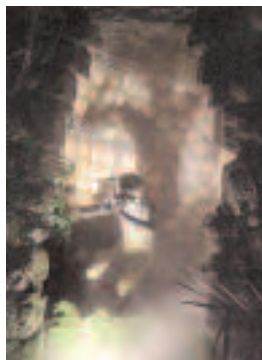


# ‘We wanted it looking as good by night as it does by day’

**Wendy Dare** explains how she and husband Barry added extra hours of enjoyment to Mill Dene, their Gloucestershire garden



**TOP** The grotto with its little statue of the god Pan looks very dramatic - if a bit spooky - when lit up. **RIGHT** The sluice gates look spectacular when lit. **ABOVE** The outline of the heron can be seen from lights placed under the surface of the water. Artwork and trees are among the best things to illuminate in a garden.

**B**arry and I have been creating our garden in the Cotswolds for over 40 years, now. Our style developed as we matured and as we became more knowledgeable (ie, we made our mistakes look as though they were deliberate!) There was one last hurdle. What was the garden doing while we slept? How did it look to all those lucky little slugs and beetles munching away in the dark? Plainly, we needed to illuminate it.

We had an amateur go at doing it, lighting the paths and the dangerous steps. The terrace seemed a good start and we enjoyed using it a lot in the evenings. But, as we sat there, gazing out into the darkness on lovely summer evenings, we played with ideas about uplighting the large willow that faces the house at the end of the mill pond. Perhaps having something under water? And, if we lit the path up to the Cricket Lawn, which is up a slope, would it make it safe to use for parties in the evening? And so on.

We obviously needed help and so contacted several lighting companies, but when we heard how much it would cost the idea went on hold until we decided that this should be The Dares' Last Stand and blow the money.

In the end, we found Paul Gwilliams from Lights4Gardens, who was prepared to divide the garden into sections and do them over time. We worked together and ideas sparked (not a good analogy, perhaps). The main objective was to enhance the plants and the important images in the garden; the second was to make night time wandering safe but unobtrusive. The Rose Walk, for instance, has uplit standard roses, which look wonderful but also allow safe progression along the path. With the backdrop of the church, the whole thing makes a marvellous picture.

Throwing gentle floods up the side of the house made new shapes, but also shows the path round the house. The sluice cut at the side of the house, with its foaming water, was a must to light up, as was the grotto with its small god Pan, now looking a little spooky. Lights under the stream, invisible in the day, emphasis the tumbling water.

We still have more to do and it really is such fun! Mill Dene Garden, School Lane, Blockley, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos GL56 9HU. Tel: +44 (0)1386 700457. Open Tuesday to Friday until end October. [www.milldenegarden.co.uk](http://www.milldenegarden.co.uk)

A special event has been organised by Wendy Dare on 12 October for readers of *The English Garden* to see how delightful Mill Dene looks when lit up. Time: 6-9pm. Price: £10 includes the first glass of wine. Book through David Andrews at *The English Garden* on +44 (0)20 7751 4826, or go to [www.theenglishgarden.co.uk](http://www.theenglishgarden.co.uk) All tickets must be booked in advance.



## USEFUL INFORMATION

- Think carefully about what you might like to light up year round. Trees and water are good options.
- It is not expensive in terms of electricity use. A standard floodlight is 500 watts and Wendy's garden was done for the equivalent of three of those.
- The spike spot used to uplight a standard rose is just a 20 watt light.
- The cost works out at 37p per kilowatt hours. Wendy's garden costs just £2 an hour to run.
- The cost of the whole project was £12,000.
- Lights4Gardens, 8 Foundry Court, Daventry NN11 4RH. Tel: + 44 (0)1327 300057. [www.lights4gardens.com](http://www.lights4gardens.com)

