Written by Bruce Walters Thursday, 15 December 2011 08:36



It's easy to start taking outdoor Christmas lights for granted about now. They have been draped over trees and strung along porch railings and under the eaves for weeks – even longer in the shopping centers.

Though often used with little real thought, they have symbolic connotations. It is intriguing to think of them as a modern equivalent of the Yule log that warmed our distant ancestors during the winter solstice. Or the guiding star over Bethlehem on the first Christmas.

Pause for a moment and consider how remarkable it is that these tiny electric lights can transform a bleak winter night into a delicately laced wonderland. How leafless trees can become magical, and simple homes can become places of wonderment. How they brighten more than the longest nights of the year. How fond memories grow from these fragile strings of lights.

Outdoor lights are typically like party decorations used to lend a festive air, although a unique Christmas display might be regarded as a kind of folk art. And the John Deere Commons in Moline is transformed into a spectacular landscape simply by the electric lights wrapped around the trees between the Deere Pavilion and the i Wireless Center. It is not out the question to think of such a display as environmental art.

Art in Plain Sight: Christmas Lights

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