A finial/torch assembly for mounting atop a hollow post portion of a fence or railing and a fence/railing assembly including the same includes a base adapted to be fitted securely atop the post, a burner including a fuel reservoir and a wick extending into the fuel reservoir, and a removable cover adapted to be fitted over the base to at least partially conceal the burner and to protect the burner from weather. The burner is secured to the base and the fuel reservoir extends from beneath the base and is adapted to be fitted substantially within an upper portion of the hollow post.
FINIAL WITH CONCEALED TORCH FOR HOLLOW POST

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the priority benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/305,753, filed Feb. 18, 2010, which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention relates generally to torches and burners for outdoor use.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Many people use outdoor candles or oil burners to provide a pleasant scent outdoors, for illumination, or to ward off pesky insects during an outdoor function. Outdoor illuminating torches, for example, TIKI TORCHES® (sold by Lamplight Farms, Inc.), are among the most popular means of providing an outdoor candle or oil burner to accomplish one or more of these tasks. Outdoor torches are, however, cumbersome in that they must first be set up, used, uninstalled, and placed back in storage if they are not to be used for extended periods of time. Outdoor torches can also be an aesthetic eyesore, as they may not fit well with the overall appearance of a user’s backyard or home.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In a first preferred form, the present invention relates to a combined finial and torch for mounting atop a hollow post portion of a fence or railing. The combined finial and torch comprises a base adapted to be fitted securely atop the post, a burner including a fuel reservoir and a wick extending into the fuel reservoir, and a removable cover adapted to be fitted over the base to at least partially conceal the burner and to protect the burner from weather. The burner is secured to the base and the fuel reservoir extends from beneath the base and is adapted to be fitted substantially within an upper portion of the hollow post.

[0005] In a second preferred form, the present invention relates to a fence or rail assembly comprising a plurality of hollow posts, rails extending between the posts, combined finials/torches mounted atop some of the hollow posts, and torchless finials mounted atop others of the posts. Each combined finial and torch comprises a base adapted to be fitted securely atop the solid post, a burner including a fuel reservoir and a wick extending into the fuel reservoir, the burner being secured to the base and the fuel reservoir fitting substantially within the hollow post, and a removable cover adapted to be fitted over the base to at least partially conceal and to protect the burner from weather. The torchless finials having substantially the same outward appearance as that of the combined finials/torches when the removable covers are covering the burners of the combined finials/torches.

[0006] Optionally, the fuel reservoir can be rectangular and when the combined finial and torch is positioned atop the hollow post the fuel reservoir can be substantially completely positioned within the post.

[0007] Optionally, the removable cover can be secured to the base by a twist-lock connection, a threaded connection, a magnet, or the like.

[0008] Also optionally, the removable cover can partly nest over the base and can be removably, but firmly, held in place by a slight interference fit between the two.

[0009] Moreover, optionally a tether can be provided and attached to both the removable cover and the base for securing the removable cover to the base when the removable cover is not positioned atop the base.

[0010] In one preferred form, the removable cover can have a substantially spherical dome-shaped upper portion. In another preferred form the removable cover has a substantially Gothic-shaped upper portion. In another preferred form the removable cover has a substantially bell-shaped upper portion.

[0011] Optionally, the base can be snugly fitted to the top of the post and can be held in place by an interference fit between the base and the top of the post.

[0012] Optionally, the post can be solid and the base can be snugly fitted to the top of the solid post and held in place by one or more fasteners extending from the base into the top of the solid post.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a combined finial/torch according to a first example embodiment of the invention.

[0014] FIG. 2 is a perspective, exploded view of the combined finial/torch of FIG. 1.

[0015] FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of a combined finial/torch according to a second example embodiment of the invention.

[0016] FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a combined finial/torch according to a third example embodiment of the invention.

[0017] FIG. 5 is a side elevation view of a fence/railing assembly according to a fourth example embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

[0018] Referring now in detail to the drawing figures, wherein reference numerals represent like parts throughout the several views, FIGS. 1-2 show a combined finial and torch 10 comprising a base 20, a burner 30, and a removable cover 40, according to a first example embodiment. The finial and torch 10 rests atop a post P. In this example embodiment, the post P is hollow and made of aluminum and has a square shaped cross-section. The post P can additionally be constructed out of other metals, resin, plastic, wood, or any other suitable material. Moreover, the post P can have a cross-section of various sizes and shapes. For example, the post P could have a circular shape and the base 20 can have a corresponding similar shape.

[0019] The base 20 rests on the top surface of the post P and can be made out of metal, plastic, resin, or any other suitable material. The base 20 comprises a base platform 22, a base lip/skirt 24, and a cover connector 26. The base 20 preferably has a shape to match that of the post P. In this embodiment, the platform 22 has a square shape and an outer periphery slightly larger than that of the cross section of the post P. The platform 22 optionally has a raised middle portion 25, having an aperture 27 formed therethrough. The inner wall of the aperture or opening 27 can optionally have an internal thread 29 formed thereon for attaching the base 20 to the burner 30. The lip/skirt
24 optionally extends downwardly from the outer periphery of the platform 22 and preferably is designed to partially cover the top of the post P. The lip/skirt 24 additionally can be designed to provide a friction or interference fit between the base 20 and the post P, as shown in FIGS. 1-2. Additionally, the base 20 optionally can be secured to the post P by a plurality of fasteners 28, such as nails, screws, or any other type of fastener. Alternatively or additionally, adhesive can be used to help secure the base 20.

[0020] The cover connector 26 rests on the top surface of the platform 22. The cover connector 26 is used to removably secure the cover 40 to the base 20 and in the example form shown is represented in this embodiment to be a plurality of rectangular nubs, as shown in FIGS. 1-2. The nubs provide a friction fit or interference fit between the base 20 and the cover 40. Other types of connections, such as a twist-lock connection, a snap-fit connection, a threaded connection, a magnetic connection, etc. or a combination of such connections, can be employed as well.

[0021] The burner 30 is secured to the base 20. The burner 30 comprises a fuel reservoir 34, a wick 36, and a burner cap 38. The reservoir 34 extends from beneath the base 20 and is adapted to be fitted substantially within an upper portion of the post P. The reservoir 34 acts as a container for fuel, such as oil or any other suitable liquid or gas fuel. Moreover, a solid or gel fuel can be employed as well. The reservoir 34 can optionally have an external thread 39 along its top portion for engaging the internal thread 29 of the base 20. The reservoir 34 is secured to the base 20 by the internal thread 29 and the external thread 39; however, other mechanisms can be employed to attach the reservoir 34 to the base 20 (e.g. a twist-lock connection, a magnetic connection, etc.).

[0022] The wick 36 extends into the reservoir 34 and has a portion fed through the burner cap 38 extending above the burner 30. The burner cap 38 is removable from the burner 30 to allow fuel to be poured into and replenished in the reservoir 34. Optionally, instead of the reservoir being threaded securely directly to the base, the threaded neck of the reservoir can extend through an optionally unthreaded bore in the base to be secured thereat with a threaded collar or nut. This later arrangement makes it easier to assign a polygon-sided reservoir for insertion into a polygon-sided post.

[0023] The cover 40 normally rests on the top of the base 20 and comprises an upper portion 42 and a lower periphery 44. The cover 40 can be made of metal, plastic, resin, or any other suitable material. The cover 40 is adapted to be fitted over the base 20 to at least partially conceal the burner 30 and protect the burner 30 from weather. It also can act to snuff the burner. The selected example cover 40 shown in FIGS. 1-2 has a substantially Gothic-shaped upper portion 42.

[0024] In FIGS. 1-2, the lower periphery 44 is a circular ring designed and dimensioned to have its inner surface engage the outer sides of the rectangular nubs 26 by a friction or interference fit. Other features and mechanisms can be added to the outer periphery 44, depending on the type of cover connector 26 used.

[0025] FIG. 3 shows a finial and torch 110 in another preferred example form, generally similar to the finial and torch 10, and having a substantially bell-shaped upper portion 142. FIG. 4 shows a finial and torch 210, similar to the finial and torch 10, having a substantially spherical dome-shaped upper portion 242 according to yet a third example embodiment. Accordingly, it can be seen that various shapes can be employed to suit design or aesthetic needs.

[0026] The finial and torch 10 can optionally include a tether 50 that secures the cover 40 to the base 20. In this example embodiment, the tether 50 depicted comprises a metal chain connected to two metal plates that are attached to both the base 20 and the cover 40. The tether 50 can be constructed of metal or plastic chain, rope, webbing, or any other suitable material. Further, the tether can be a bit of monofilament line, string, leather, etc. Additionally, the tether 50 can be dimensioned to be any desired length, depending on the size of the finial and torch 10, mounting locations of the tether 50, etc. Optionally, the tether 50 can be removable from the base 20 and/or the cover 40.

[0027] In use, the finial and torch 10 initially rests atop the post P. A user can remove the cover 40 and optionally set the cover 40 hang from the base 20 by the tether 50. The user can then ignite the wick 36 with a match, lighter, or the like, burning the fuel to create a pleasant scent, provide illumination, ward off insects, etc., depending on the type of fuel contained inside the reservoir 34. If the fuel in the reservoir 34 runs out, the user can refill the reservoir 34 with more fuel by removing the burner cap 38 and pouring fuel into the reservoir 34. Additionally, the user can refill the reservoir 34 by lifting the base 20 out from the post P, removing the reservoir 34 from the base 20, and pouring fuel into the reservoir 34 through its top portion. When the burner 30 is no longer needed, the user can extinguish the flame on the wick 36, re-cover the burner 30 with the cover 40, and re-secure the cover 40 to the base 20 by means of the cover connector 26. Optionally, the user can simply replace the cover 40 on the base 20 to snuff the flame.

[0028] As seen in FIG. 5, a fence or rail assembly 18 is shown according to another example embodiment of the present invention. The fence or rail assembly 18 comprises a plurality of posts 12, a plurality of rails 14 extending between the posts 12, a plurality of combined finials/torches 10 mounted atop some of the posts 12, and a plurality of torchless finials 16 mounted atop the other posts 12. The combined finials/torches 10 are substantially similar to the first example embodiment finial and torch 10. The combined finials/torches 10 can optionally be placed in sequential, alternating, or random order amongst the fence posts 12, allowing the user to determine the most favorable setup for his/her fence assembly. As seen in FIG. 5, optionally the combined finials/torches 10 are placed in alternating order with the torchless finials 16 atop the posts 12. The torchless finials 16 have substantially the same outward appearance as that of the combined finials/torches 10 such that the combined finials/torches 10 and the torchless finials 16 match each other aesthetically. The fence or rail assembly 18 can be sold as a prefabricated unit, an assembly kit, or as separate components to allow for complete customization by the user.

[0029] While this invention has been described in detail with particular reference to exemplary embodiments and variations thereof, it is to be understood that other variations and modifications can be effected within the scope and spirit of the invention, as described above and as defined in the appended claims.

What is claimed is:
1. A combined finial and torch for mounting atop a hollow post portion of a fence or railing, the combined finial and torch comprising:
   a base adapted to be fitted securely atop the post;
   a burner including a fuel reservoir and a wick extending into the fuel reservoir, the burner being secured to the
base and the fuel reservoir extending from beneath the base and adapted to be fitted substantially within an upper portion of the hollow post; and a removable cover adapted to be fitted over the base to at least partially conceal the burner and to protect the burner from weather.

2. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 wherein the fuel reservoir is rectangular and when the combined finial and torch is positioned atop the hollow post the fuel reservoir is substantially completely positioned within the post.

3. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 2 wherein the removable cover is secured to the base by a twist-lock connection.

4. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 2 wherein the removable cover is secured to the base by a threaded connection.

5. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 2 wherein the removable cover is secured to the base by a magnet.

6. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 2 wherein the removable cover partly nests over the base and is removably, but firmly, held in place by a slight interference fit between the two.

7. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 further comprising a tether attached to both the removable cover and the base for securing the removable cover to the base when the removable cover is not positioned atop the base.

8. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 wherein the removable cover has a substantially spherical dome-shaped upper portion.

9. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 wherein the removable cover has a substantially Gothic-shaped upper portion.

10. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 wherein the removable cover has a substantially bell-shaped upper portion.

11. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 wherein the base is snugly fitted to the top of the post and is held in place by an interference fit between the base and the top of the post.

12. A combined finial and torch as claimed in claim 1 wherein the post is solid and the base is snugly fitted to the top of the solid post and is held in place by one or more fasteners extending from the base into the top of the solid post.

13. A fence or rail assembly comprising: a plurality of hollow posts; rails extending between the posts; combined finials/torches mounted atop some of the hollow posts, each combined finial and torch comprising a base adapted to be fitted securely atop the solid post, a burner including a fuel reservoir and a wick extending into the fuel reservoir, the burner being secured to the base and the fuel reservoir fitting substantially within the hollow post, and a removable cover adapted to be fitted over the base to at least partially conceal the burner and to protect the burner from weather, and torchless finials/mounted atop others of the posts, the torchless finials having substantially the same outward appearance as that of the combined finials/torches.

14. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the fuel reservoir is rectangular and when the combined finial and torch is positioned atop the hollow post the fuel reservoir is substantially completely positioned within the post.

15. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 14 wherein the removable cover is secured to the base by a twist-lock connection.

16. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 14 wherein the removable cover is secured to the base by a threaded connection.

17. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 14 wherein the removable cover is secured to the base by a magnet.

18. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 14 wherein the removable cover partly nests over the base and is removably, but firmly, held in place by a slight interference fit between the two.

19. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 further comprising a tether attached to both the removable cover and the base for securing the removable cover to the base when the removable cover is not positioned atop the base.

20. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the removable cover has a substantially spherical dome-shaped upper portion.

21. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the removable cover has a substantially Gothic-shaped upper portion.

22. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the removable cover has a substantially bell-shaped upper portion.

23. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the base is snugly fitted to the top of the post and is held in place by an interference fit between the base and the top of the post.

24. A fence or rail assembly as claimed in claim 13 wherein the post is solid and the base is snugly fitted to the top of the solid post and is held in place by one or more fasteners extending from the base into the top of the solid post.

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