

A DIFFERENT BEAT

Bringing nature into gardens

A PASSION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT MEANS A BENEFIT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES.

Melbourne landscape designer Phillip Johnson is a prime example of a person who has followed his passion.

But it hasn't all been plain sailing for the Olinda designer, who knew from early in his career that he wanted to work with indigenous plants and create sustainable gardens.

"That idea was not in vogue at all when I started," he says, "Everybody wanted English gardens and rose bushes. It was a hard journey and I really had to struggle to change people's tastes in garden design and educate them on the benefits of sustainable native and indigenous plants."

Phillip, who won the Best Show Garden at last

year's Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show with 'Habitat', a native Australian wonderland, finds nature inspiring.

He first studied environmental and outdoor education, which enabled him to work and enjoy rock climbing, hiking and bushwalking. It was while he was working in the US as a lecturer that he realised what he wanted to do with the rest of his life – bring nature and habitats into people's gardens.

Phillip Johnson Sustainable Landscape Systems (formerly Greenmark Landscapes Pty Ltd) began creating native and indigenous wonderlands in Victoria more than 15 years ago.

"I saw there was a need to create really beautiful landscapes in urban areas, including in small inner city spaces," Phillip says. "I love creating natural habitats with waterholes that encourage birdlife and frogs."

His passion for the environment also means he integrates sustainable practices into each landscape, including innovative water capture and conservation systems, solar power, permaculture, aquaculture and the use of local and recycled materials.

As somebody who is living his dream, Phillip encourages anybody with an idea that is 'out there' or unique to "go for it".

"You absolutely must take that step and believe in your passion," he says.

For more information on Phillip Johnson, visit www.phillipjohnson.com.au

