

Phil Stray, director of Crafted Landscapes, discusses his approach to landscaping projects, the Ruffey Lake Park project and his use of Ability's abilox® colouring pigments for colouring his concrete creations.

Phil Stray - 30 years of industry experience.

Crafted Landscapes has been producing original landscape creations for 30 years. The company is well known for its intuitive design and unique style as well as for offering a wide range of skills including carpentry, building, dry stone walls and the use of innovative washed aggregate concrete finishes.

Phil Stray started out in his early years producing, amongst other things, variations on the humble sand pit, including rock formations and differing pit shapes for youngsters to play in.

His 'thinking outside the square' and making the 'ordinary' 'extraordinary' was instantly popular with his clients and this approach has never left him or his Company throughout the years.

What inspires Phil Stray?

Phil describes his style generally as: 'earthy in approach while having fun with design'. Ancient celtic art, mythology, symbolism and in particular the labyrinth - a highly complex symbol - all fascinate Phil. 'I just love the look of them, the feeling of them, the spiralling mandala (symbolic diagram) of them - any opportunity I have, I do a labyrinth'. 'There is energy in spirals, maze patterns and labyrinths - I try to incorporate these into my landscape designs'.



Phil Stray with his 'Gecko' creation at Ruffey Park Lake.

What type of projects is Crafted Landscapes involved in?

Crafted Landscapes has worked on many varieties of projects, including residential gardens, schools and preschool play environments, child-friendly landscapes that incorporate unusual play areas created with a sense of whimsy and flair, but always blending harmoniously and integrally with its surroundings.

An outstanding example of this can be seen at Ruffey Lake Park, a landscape project completed around March 2008, created in conjunction with the City of Manningham, which artistically depicts three lizards; including a Gecko and a Skink as concrete relief interactive sculptures, while the other lizard, a Blue Tongue, was created in two dimensional mosaic and coloured concrete work.

How and why is Ability's abilox® used?

For the sculptured concrete lizards as well as the surrounding graphics work, stairs and pebble mosaics **abilox**® pigments were utilised to colour and visually connect all of the elements. Phil prefers Ability's **abilox**® colours because he finds that particularly with the blacks, the colours are softer on the eye than other brands and exactly what he is looking for.

Why Ability products?

"We work hard to achieve an interesting finish. That's where Ability comes in with its **abilox**® colours. Their soft pastel colours are just what we want and in time, as they age, they just look better and better". Apart from the excellent colour selection, Phil is very pleased with Ability's service; "they're very helpful to deal with, they have all the range there for me to choose from, I can see what I want and it's all done quickly. For most jobs I don't have time to wait around so their efficiency is a credit to them".



Image of 'Skink' at Ruffey Lake Park



Image of 'Gecko' at Ruffey Lake Park