

## LEED COUNCIL FOCUSES ON A MEMBER: ALTERNATIVE GARDEN SUPPLY

### Alternative Garden Supply

Local Facility  
1824 N Besly Ct.  
Chicago, IL 60622  
(773) 395-1500

Headquarters  
615A Industrial Dr.  
Cary, IL 60013  
(847) 516-4776

[www.altgarden.com](http://www.altgarden.com)



In 1984 the neighbors thought David Ittel, founder of Alternative Garden Supply, was a bit odd. They would ask; “David, you do what for a living?” At the time he was living in the suburbs of Indianapolis with his wife and two very young sons. He had a basement full of pest-laden bean and tobacco plants. Metal halides, running on 240 volts, lit the whole basement, and he had an air-to-hot water heat pump rigged up to keep things cool. He had become obsessed with chemical free pest control. The beans were infested with spider mites that were to be served up to an army of predators. The predator was the voracious *Phytoseiulus persimilis*. It is known worldwide as the beneficial mite that has only two things on its mind, consuming the dreaded spider mites and producing eggs that will hatch into more hungry predators.

David’s Kentucky Burley tobacco plants were the favorite food source of the greenhouse whitefly. He built up the numbers of whitefly so his *Encarsia formosa* could lay eggs in their larvae. The larvae would then die, as the immature *Encarsia* consumed them. When the *Encarsia* hatch, they seek out many new whitefly larvae to lay new eggs in. *Encarsia* is a parasitic wasp so tiny you need a magnifying glass to see it properly. With these two attack dog populations, David began Alternative Garden Supply as a source of pest control tools that were an alternative to chemical pesticides. The other part of their business was the sales of quality indoor gardening products. Over time, product sales became the core of their business, but they never forgot their roots. He still believes integrated pest management (IPM) is by far the best method to control plant pests.



In the early days, the company experienced obstacles while growing. People thought the idea of growing pests in a basement was crazy; even his accountant said the idea is to make money. Several years later, the business has grown and now employs 30 individuals. A lot of the employees are crossed trained and their duties vary from shipping and receiving, office staff and staff with a background in horticulture. A couple of employees received certificates in green roofing.

Since the company has grown they have increased their number of clients. Some of their customers have included the United States Department of Agriculture, the University of WI, and the Chicago Park District. The company is so unique and different that they dominate their business sector. In addition, the company has several facilities in the states of Illinois and Wisconsin.

David stated he liked his current facility location in the Elston Corridor Planned Manufacturing District (PMD) because it has easy access to the interstate. The company is actually moving at the end of this year to Kedzie just north of Addison. They are building a facility that meets their needs more with a warehouse that has high ceilings. When asked about improvements needed for the area of their current location he said, "the streets in the area could definitely be improved. The street surfaces are not as smooth as they once used to be and could undergo repaving." He continued to say that he enjoys reading the emails that he receives from the LEED Council because they keep him up-to-date with current news.



In conclusion, David said that he enjoys eating lunch at Hot Doug's located at 3324 North California (Doug is a graduate of Kendall College ). They have a different and unusual menu. Also, Mundial Cocina Mestiza located at 1640 W. 18th St. is great for Mexican food with a flare of Mediterranean influence. One last suggestion was Schwa located at 1466 N Ashland Ave. One thing about Mundial Cocina Mestiza and Schwa is you can BYOB (bring your own beverage)!

Thank you Alternative Garden Supply for all your support over the years. May you continue to build an army of pest predators to protect our gardens.