

BY RON HALL / SENIOR EDITOR

Standing the test of time

For a family business to survive and prosper from year to year, decade to decade, it must refocus and redirect its efforts as market conditions change.

Just ask William E. Akehurst of Akehurst Landscape Service, Inc., Joppa, MD. He represents the fourth generation of the Akehurst family involved in the green industry. He works elbow-to-elbow with several fifth generation family members. The Akehursts have, in one way or another, participated in the professional landscape industry in Maryland and surrounding areas for more than 130 years.

Today, their offices are located in a tidy ranch-style house on a ridge just east of and overlooking I-95. The location allows company crews quick access to Baltimore's eastern and northern suburbs.

This year, they want to purchase some land to expand their operation headquartered just north of Baltimore. They plan to grow more landscape plant material, too.

In a sense, they are returning to their roots because the family first began growing commercial plant material near Baltimore 133 years ago. It all began when Charles Akehurst and his son, C. Edward, produced flowers such as carnations and violets along with vegetable plants in 1876. Then came rose bushes for the garden trade and, early in the 20th century, the family expanded into cut flowers, including prize-winning carnations and roses.

Succeeding generations modified the business to meet changing market conditions — and the process continues. Today, the company offers a full range of landscape services, both exterior and interior.

William E. Akehurst, the patriarch of the operation, is joined in the business by his three sons, William K., Brian E. and John C. They, along with other family members, work together daily, each re-



The Akehurst team prepares for another 100 years. From the left, William E. Akehurst, John C. Akehurst, Jay F. Tarleton, Brian E. Akehurst and William K. Akehurst.

sponsible for a particular part of the company. Son William K. heads the landscape division, son Brian runs grounds maintenance, son John C. the interiorscape division and nephew Jay F. Tarleton is the company's administrative officer.

While the elder Akehurst acknowledged that each family member has a distinctive style and there are, from time to time, disagreements within the family business, every family member works cooperatively to keep the business competitive and responsive to customer needs — and each is willing to improve and redirect the operation's services to meet an ever-changing marketplace.

Contact Ron at 440/891-2636
or e-mail at rhall@advanstar.com



"...Every family member works cooperatively to keep the business competitive..." — RH