



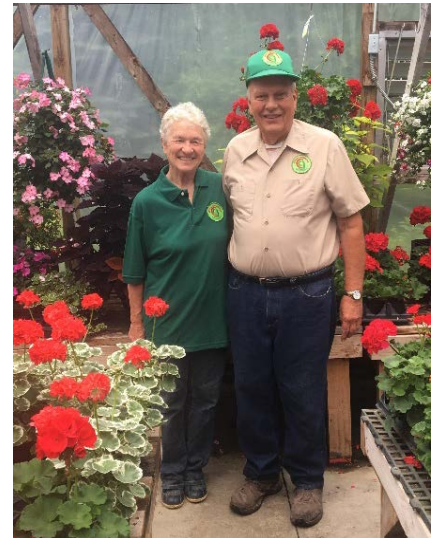
2018 ST. LOUIS COUNTY FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR

Ron and Dianne Sikkila and Family

CHERRY GREENHOUSE, IRON, MN

SOW A LITTLE SEED

In 1974, Ron and Dianne Sikkila purchased a suitable property to raise a family and along with it came an “inherited” 1200 square foot greenhouse that would cultivate into a thriving, three-generation 30,000 square foot source for bedding and vegetable plants, trees, shrubs, supplies, and seeds for folks from the Twin Cities to International Falls and all across the Iron Range. After 44 years, the Sikkila’s and their staff of 34 seasonal employees have become the areas resource for advice and “happiness and hope” provided along with each plant.



Ron and Dianne Sikkila

Growing up on farms at opposite ends of the state provided the foundation and passion to nurture a garden every year of their 49 years of marriage. They take pride in preserving much of the bounty for winter use along with local berries and fruits. Due to northern Minnesota’s shorter growing season and temperate weather, new greenhouse vegetable varieties are trialed in their own garden for evaluation. Currently, the greenhouse begins seeding in January and receives cuttings in February. By mid-April the Chisholm location is opening with preliminary readiness activities and remains open late into the fall for tree, shrub and perennial plantings. The Sikkila’s live in Cherry and are available year-round to answer questions and are pursuing ways to keep the Chisholm Cherry Greenhouse open year round.

KEEPING IT GREEN

Be it in the ground, in pots or hanging containers, plants bring the satisfaction of creating a green space. Whether it is large or small, tasty edibles or decorative, working with Mother Earth brings well-being and happiness to customers young and old. Despite the hectic planting season, Ron and Dianne are very active in their communities often hosting Cub Scout groups, hundreds of local elementary, summer and home schooled students and youngsters at Earth Fest and Perrella Home Show and local community and church groups sharing vegetable, flower or landscape information and tips. Both Ron and Dianne have served in a variety of capacities for the Cherry Fire Department, Cherry Area Fair and Rodeo Board, Cherry High School VoAg Board and the AEOA Board for Low Income Loans & Grants. Dianne has served as the Cherry PTA President and Cherry Music Booster President organizing their annual Cherry Pasty Sale utilizing donated ingredients and managing volunteers to work around the clock at the marathon pasty-making weekends thereby supporting band trips, music and uniforms and most notably, the year the band played at the presidential inauguration.



Zach Sikkila, 11, is often the trailer runner for the greenhouse - retrieving heavy pots for customers and supplies for staff

44 YEARS AND STILL “GROWING” STRONG

In 2005, son Jon and his wife, Billie returned to the Iron Range to assist Ron and Dianne in the greenhouse business. The next generation of Sikkila's arrived in 2006 with the birth of grandson, Ty, and in 2007 the arrival of Zach and Kylie in 2010. Like Jon, the youngest Sikkila's began working in the greenhouse at a young age and enjoy helping whenever they can. As Jon re-emerged himself into the greenhouse life in which he was raised, he formed his own side company, Sikkila's Outdoor Services, which incorporates plants from the greenhouse into the landscaping of area residents. Through his landscaping company, which was developed to go hand-in-hand with the greenhouse, he not only designs beautiful outdoor living spaces with patios and retaining walls, he weaves in perennials, bedding plants, trees and shrubs into to the gorgeous tapestry that becomes someone's front or back yard.



Jon and Billie Sikkila

Volunteering runs deep in the Sikkila family and Jon and Billie have become ingrained in their small community through supporting local organizations and school activities. Whether it is coaching and organizing concessions for t-ball,



football or serving as den leaders for their sons Cub Scout group, they recognize the importance of introducing children to gardening at a young age. Many hours are donated and dedicated to field trips and education at the greenhouse. Jon is a volunteer firefighter and Billie's passion for music has assisted many local organizations and private groups with their fundraising efforts.

Ron, Dianne and Jon are all proud alumni of University of Minnesota. The Cherry Greenhouse is located at 9960 Townline Road, Iron and 800 6th Street SW in Chisholm. They can be reached by email at cherrygreenhouse@wildblue.net

Ty Sikkila, 12, and Kylie Sikkila, 7, each have their own unique jobs in the greenhouse.

Ty is often found at the register with a bright smile and excitement to help customers while Kylie takes a more active role in plant care.



Left to right: Jon, Billie, Dianne, Ron, Zach, Ty, Kylie

