

Scott Merlyn Aker was born July 8, 1965 in Rapid City, South Dakota to Merlyn Aker and Darlene (Brick) Aker. The family lived on a hill overlooking Spring Creek south of Rapid City until 1972, when they moved to Whitewood, South Dakota. Scott attended grade school in Whitewood and junior high and high school in Sturgis.

Scott was awarded a National Merit Scholarship for his high-test scores and attended the University of Minnesota - Saint Paul, where he graduated with highest honors with a degree in horticulture. Next, he attended the University of Maryland - College Park, where he earned a master's degree in horticulture.

After a short time working as an extension office urban horticulturist, Scott was hired by the United States National Arboretum in Washington, DC, where he rose to become head of the public gardens. He also wrote a weekly garden column for the Washington Post, "Digging In" and was a contributing writer for Time-Life books on gardening. Scott married Laurie Helman in Laurel, Maryland, where they lived and had twin sons. The marriage ended in divorce. Scott served in several leadership and volunteer roles in Saint Phillip's Episcopal Church in Laurel.

After retiring from the national arboretum, Scott accepted a position as Director of the Cheyenne Botanical Garden in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 2022. Scott passed away at home in Cheyenne October 13, 2025 from complications from medications he was taking to prevent recurrence of melanoma.

Scott is survived by his sons, Forest Aker, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Stokes Aker, Lansing, Michigan; a brother, Alan (Heidi) Aker, Piedmont, SD; a sister, Cindy Ladner, Rapid City, SD, and a sister, Deb (Dan) Schmidt, Whitewood, SD, and by numerous nieces and nephews.

Scott was preceded in death by his father Merlyn in 1992 and mother Darlene in February 2025.

Scott was a redeemed Christian, a devoted father, a giver, a plant collector, a loyal friend, a true leader, and delighted in sharing the gift of laughter.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.kinkadefunerals.com

The family invites you to join them for fellowship and a meal at the church, following the burial. Thank you for your presence and condolences.

In Loving Memory



Scott Merlyn Aker

July 8, 1965 ~ October 13, 2025



The Garden's strength

*In the garden where love took
root,*

*Through life's fierce journey,
your greatness grew,*

*You stood for truth, faced battles unseen,
A spirit strong, a love that's keen.*

Your love, a force, so pure, so true,

A great person, through and through,

Though you're gone, your memory stays,

*The garden's strength, through darkest
days.*

We'll honor your life, your memory hold,

A love unwavering, a story untold,

Our dear one, forever near,

The garden's strength, in memory clear.



In Loving Memory Of Scott Merlyn Aker

Born

July 8, 1965
Rapid City, South Dakota

Died

October 13, 2025
Cheyenne, Wyoming

Funeral Service

Saturday, October 25, 2025, 10:00 a.m.
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Whitewood, South Dakota

Officiant

Reverend David Baer

Acolyte

Wesley Ladner

Musicians

Pianist:
JoAnn Baer
Soloist:
Barb Daniels

Readers

Sarah Aker Sampica
Heather Aker
Lanie Ewing
Cassidy Ewing

Musical Selections

"Beat You There" "Welcome Home"
"It Is Well With My Soul" "I Can Only Imagine"

Pallbearers

Jarred Schmidt Ty Ewing
TJ Ewing Adam Ladner
Matt Ladner Chase Ladner
Erik Aker Kevin Tunison

Final Resting Place

Whitewood Cemetery
Whitewood, South Dakota