

Front Lines

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Two Industry Icons Meet

Jennifer Polanz



From left to right: Martha Stewart's Bedford estate head gardener Ryan McCallister; Adrian Soulié, marketing and product development for Meilland; Julie Portalier, secretary general for Meilland; Martha Stewart and Anna Ball.

If you followed the buzz on the Cultivate'26 trade show floor the Monday afternoon of the event, it led you (and about 70 to 80 other people) to the Star Roses & Plants booth where industry icon Martha Stewart and her entourage visited her namesake rose and met Ball Horticultural Company CEO Anna Ball for the first time.

"The trade show went all a-flutter when Martha came through!" said Anna, reflecting on the experience (adding she was trying not to stare at her gorgeous skin). "I didn't have much of a chance anyway because she made a beeline for our new Triple Knock Out Rose and then the Garden Gem trees.

"Say what you want about Martha, but she really and truly knows her plants. She spotted the great ones right away and wanted to take them right home ... which she did. What Martha wants, she gets! It was a real treat to meet her. She is a remarkable ambassador for our industry."

Susan Bacus Morgan, marketing and brand manager for Star Roses & Plants, didn't have a lot of time to prepare for such a big event, but she and her team

were able to make it all come together despite the crunch.

"We found out last Wednesday she was coming to the show," said Susan, who has stayed in close contact with her team since Star introduced the rose and has a great relationship with both Martha and her team.

Martha was at the show to help Miracle-Gro celebrate its 75th anniversary with parent company Scotts Miracle-Gro, and the Star team made sure there was a rose in the Miracle-Gro booth and the Star one.

“Martha was so excited to meet Anna Ball,” Susan said. “It was two icons, one from the pop culture world and one from the horticulture world coming together.”

Susan, who had met Martha previously during concurrent visits to QVC, said Martha has continued to learn about the industry and wants to have a better understanding of the plants and the companies producing them.

“Making the connection with Anna and having her meet the team from Meilland was really special,” Susan added of the French partners who bred Martha’s rose.

And after seeing Martha’s interest in the Garden Gems Cercis collection, Susan was able to easily accommodate her with Garden Gems Amethyst and Emerald varieties, which eventually got loaded up ... onto Martha’s private plane. **GP**