

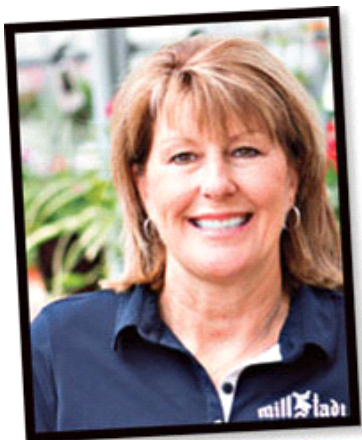
GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

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Women Alone Have Power, Collectively We Have Impact

Amy Morris



AMY MORRIS

I was fortunate six years ago when I was asked to attend Week 24 trials as one of the “Leading Ladies of our Industry.” What an honor it was for me to be chosen and to be able to go through the European trials with an amazing group. The diversity of this group of ladies was truly inspiring.

When I think of the ladies of our industry, I think of some who’ve shown up, spoke up, stood up for themselves and who’ve put fear aside and accepted the fact that failure can happen. The quality of each one of these ladies just proved my suspicions to be true: When you put a group of women together, you realize each of their strengths and create a stronger force. Forming a connection with women who’ve already been there, done that, also helps others bring out their unique talents of leadership. I don’t know if I’d ever been so proud as I was to be part of this group.

As part of the trip we spent half a day at a collaboration workshop. I was truly astonished with the flow of ideas that were presented by each person in the group. A few things I learned is that we need to take away the stereotype that women don’t support women. I’ve seen firsthand women benefit better over collaboration vs. competition. Raising each other up and testing the power of collaboration is truly how we’ll change the equation. At the end of the day we have a lot more fun doing it.

This trip made me come home with a whole new perspective of women in our industry. The more I thought about it, I realized that I needed to be a better mentor to women in our industry. To help them realize that they don’t have to face all their challenges alone. There is power in a pack.

I’m very grateful for my squad or my pack; it’s been good for my professional life and my mental wellbeing. Not only do we support each other, but we act as connectors to people and opportunities. We share a glass of wine and celebrate each other. I’m very lucky to be part of a group of women who want you to be the best in their career and will actively help you triumph.

When I decided to write an article on women supporting women, of course I reached out to my pack for some sound advice I could share. Here are a few words of wisdom:

- “Have faith in your own value, but first you have to figure out what that is.”—Jan Couch

- “Be persistent, push yourself as far as you can go. It may be uncomfortable, but be part of the process.”

—Julie Alman

- “We need to be thankful and honor all the badass women before us that have paved the road to where we are today. And we need to be badass women to continue paving the road for our daughters and granddaughters.”

—Susie Raker-Zimmerman

As women, we have to work harder and be better. Our plates as women are so full ... there's no question of that. But we can't let traditional gender roles define who we are. We're very lucky to be living in these times because we can talk about these things and actually have a chance of being heard.

I want woman in our industry to be their own advocates, get themselves a “go-to” squad. Find yourself a group you can go to with anything, bounce ideas off of, ask for advice or for an introduction. Put fear aside—fear keeps us from being creative and successful. Don't let others pass you by. Find yourself a mentor to reach out to. Don't be afraid to ask.

As Susie said, it's so important for us to keep paving the way for our daughter and granddaughters. Mary Beth Cowardin with AmericanHort has spearheaded a monthly series called “Women in Horticulture.” This series is showing women play a crucial role in the horticulture industry, as entrepreneurs, growers, researchers, marketers, and at all levels of our industry. It's been a successful series and very informative. I encourage all of you to participate.

A few thoughts in closing: when it comes to helping others, take time to listen. No one is beneath you. Focus on being true to yourself and stay confident in your ability. Surround yourself with good women and the question isn't who's going to let me, it's who's going to stop me? **GT**

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