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The Year of the Small Business Crocodile

Amanda Thomsen



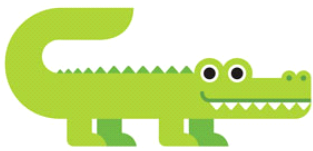
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I don't know why, but when I get a series of things right I saunter around the shop and shout, "That's right! The small business crocodile is IN DA HOUSE!" Why a crocodile? I don't know, other than it's out to get things done and you'll see it "after a while."

Here are the crocodile's 2024 business goals:

- I'll be sliding into Year 2 in July—isn't that when small businesses fail? I can certainly understand that's when the cracks begin to show. In 2024, I'm turning my attention to marketing, something I thought I knew about, but clearly do not. I'm learning what I can, when I can and throwing myself into new situations because that's the best way—for me—to learn. I'm reading articles, books, taking webinars, and then I sleep on it and make it my own. I'm going to make measured attempts at new marketing options and then, sleep on it again and decide if being consistent with each method will pan out and what those expectations look like. This is a huge departure from the "seat-of-pants" marketing I've been into so far. Everything has led to this, and when I learn a lot and put it into the gumbo that I call a brain ... well, it makes me feel a little like a certain toothy reptile with armored skin.
- A renewed attempt at self-care will be at the heart of 2024. This means taking two days off a week and that's really all it means. I've been fiercely defending those two sacred days, until I just don't and then everything goes down the toilet. In 2023, I re-started a farmers market in the village my shop is in and it really ate at one of my days off and I really haven't recovered. I'm not a kid anymore, even though my humor is distinctly juvenile, and I feel a sort of brain fog when I'm overtired that isn't conducive to owning a retail establishment. Like, I can't remember plants' names (or employees). Taking more time for myself will make me feel more like myself and also like someone who tucks its feet to the side while swimming, making it faster by decreasing water resistance.
- Year 2 is perfect for putting systems in place. This is easier with a teenaged workforce than I forecasted. They're like, "Okay, whatever." I was surprised at how much money I spent in 2023 on setting things, background things, up correctly that I would have assumed was all wrapped up in 2022. Like, I moved my office this year, found appropriate storage where I never expected and created workspaces (indoors and out) that serve us and our customers, but we haven't really committed to anything since there were so many changes for that first year. Now that the dust has settled, it's time to regiment things. Did you know crocodiles survived the Mass Extinction? It's true.

- 2024 is when I'm going to stop being so risky with wholesale purchasing (she says after ordering \$400 worth of gnomes she didn't need for the store). I swear, the gnomes were the last straw. I really like the people who make the gnomes so I overbought. I can't keep that up, right? I mean, OBVIOUS BAD BUSINESS DECISION! Would a crocodile order lots of things because they thought the makers were super nice? Crocodiles literally cannibalize smaller crocodiles. Crikey! Does this mean I've got to eat someone this year? Metaphorically, of course. Maybe it's time. I wonder if crocodiles engage in negative self-talk ...?
- I'm venturing out in 2024. For the last year and a half I've kept operations centralized, not participating in setting up for an Earth Day booth or master gardener symposium. I can't haul all this stuff out there and keep the show going at the same time. OR CAN I? I'd like to get out there this year, if only to have a booth at the farmers market ... uh, that I actually run. This isn't that much of a stretch except it really feels like it is. Did you know that most species of crocodiles aren't highly territorial, with the exception of the saltwater crocodile, which is a highly territorial and aggressive species.



So here's to tearing it up in 2024! Wish me luck!

P.S. Crocodiles are known to live up to a century! **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author now with her own store, Aster Gardens in Lemont, Illinois. Her blog is planted at [KissMyAster.com](https://kissmyaster.com) and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.