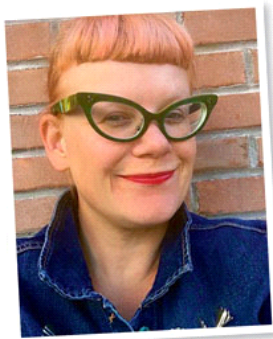


Kiss My Aster

8/1/2024

Signs of Attraction

Amanda Thomsen



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"I just love reading all your signs!" I hear it once a week at least. Customers love reading my signage so much they walk around the shop looking for signs like it's an Easter egg hunt. I 100% know that's not an industry norm and it's hilarious.

When I first started this shop, it was my intention to be the most well-signed plant shop on the planet, but then life got in the way and now I'm notoriously bad at signage (and price tags, SO GUILTY!). It's what I wish I had time to do—I'm a writer after all, but I'm usually in the trenches getting a beat down so I don't get around to it. We have SO LITTLE signage in this shop that when the crystal lady (a consigner, I don't have crystal-buying money around here) dropped off a bunch of signage for her crystals I told her that I couldn't use her gorgeous, thoughtful and well-designed

signage because we'd have more crystal signs than plant signs and that would be a super bad look for me.

The crystal lady makes me look bad, on the regular. I still like her.

As I continue to get better at getting signage done, the signs in my shop are informative, surprising and almost always the gateway to a conversation (where the tone has been set as knowledgeable, but not boring). Customers don't know what they're going to get and I'm telling you that the key to getting customers to read your signs is to keep them on their toes.

Which would you prefer?

This Echinacea ...

Grows to be 24" x 24"

Will get as big as a really big breadbox

You don't have to choose because I'd write, "This Echinacea will grow to 24" by 24" (or the size of a really big bread box) and attracts bees that you will be on a first-name basis with." And, I mean, there are no lies there and it's easier to remember that than something more strictly factual.

Other examples of signage around here:

- "Do Not Trigger The Venus Flytraps (At Your Peril)"
- "The Items In This Card Catalog Are 98% Not For Sale" (This has only increased sales from the card catalog by

2,000%)

- I have a label on our leaf shine spray that says, “Sexy Spray” and everyone wants to know allllll about that
- Our indoor plant category signs: “Pet Friendly,” “Not Afraid of the Dark,” “Fancy Plants,” “Vining” and “Heavy Drinkers”
- In small print at the end of our register receipts, it says, “We take garlic bread as tender”
- “Lucky Bamboo is neither ‘lucky’ nor ‘bamboo’, let’s discuss!”

I’m working on our sold area so that it has a strip of yellow caution tape and a sign that says, “If you take something from that area, I can look up who did the deed on our Square Register and confront them.” And regular customers know I’m all about the awkward confrontations AND ALSO everyone will get a laugh (unless they are guilty).

I have a simple sign in front of our classroom that says that there’s nothing else for sale past that point and it makes people RABID to get back there, but they adhere to the sign. They want the privilege of getting in there so bad; I tell them they get to look if they take a class and SHAZAM then we’re booking them into classes.

Listen, you could write up a totally straight, informative sign and the fine print could be “Absolutely every employee involved with making this sign was wearing pants” and you’ve just changed the tone of this party completely.

What I’m saying is that the old joke where you’re helping a friend move, but it’s a terrible experience so you write absolutely UNFORGIVABLE things on the moving boxes to try to embarrass literally anyone involved with the moving process works as a business practice. I guess it helps that I don’t take myself too seriously; I don’t have to because I know I’m large and in charge! Why not have a little fun, poke a little fun and use my signs to start a conversation? Because that’s the part that does the selling. **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 and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.