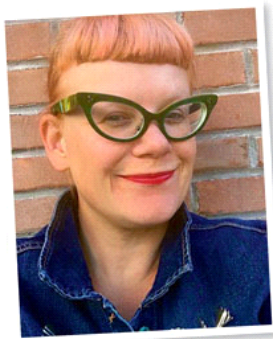


## Kiss My Aster

11/1/2024

### Building a Better Galaxy

*Amanda Thomsen*



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Starting Aster Gardens has been like being the creator of a solar system. Being sole owner, I've had to pick the atmospheres, the kinds of extraterrestrials that would populate each planet, and also, the bathroom tile. All by myself. Sometimes I had to choose something important in a hurry without quite literally any clue as to what I was doing.

I've learned to extend myself a kind of grace I have NEVER known in my whole life. I had to learn to be content with the idea of "circling back" when the time was better and I was wiser. I've grown better at self-soothing as the years have ticked off; what once would keep me awake at night is now just a sneeze. I now realize that if I take two steps in the right direction, opportunities will present themselves that I wouldn't

have dreamed of six steps back. There's no pile I can step in that tons of other people haven't stepped in—and left tracks all over the house—before me.

I told someone that the galaxy analogy was lost on me, that I was done "building the car" and at some point I was made aware it had no carburetor under the hood so I stuck an empty mayonnaise jar in there where the carburetor should be and no one has caught on yet, but I'm still here ready to switch out that mayonnaise jar for at least a calculator or furnace air filter or something that's a step in the right direction. As I learn what a carburetor is, it all gets more dialed into focus.

I now truly understand why the failure rate for small businesses is 30% by the end of the second year. The money runs out and you learn everything you did wrong. All the cracks are showing. After getting an extension on my taxes, I showed up to the accountant's office with nothing but an interpretive dance instead of receipts and ledgers. There are cracks everywhere, but I'm handy with the spackle and I know how and where to ask for help from friends that like to make "caulk" jokes. I feel the luxury of being able to go back and fix these things; it feels like a clean bathtub filled with plush velvet and cheesecake.

Is it smooth sailing in my galaxy? I mean, is it ever smooth sailing in an entire galaxy? I'm just glad I can move on from the building stage and into the improving stage. There's always going to be a planet that hates another planet because they're envious of their resources, an occasional asteroid belt wreaks havoc, comets that will delight and that one planet where everything stinks really bad. I mean, everybody occasionally bounces their intergalactic credits and gets in trouble with The Federation once in a while, right? Right?

My hopes for this upcoming year is to get out of my universe and visit other people's solar systems. I am going to continue to train my Aster-naughts how to complete projects from start to finish and how to put things that have a

home, away.

I've evolved from an eldest daughter that's driven to be correct in all things and from people pleasing to someone that realizes you're going to break a few eggs if you're going to get this much done. My galaxy is so far from where I started I can't even behold it from here. There's no going back or at least until my five-year lease with option for two more is up. **GP**

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