

Kiss My Aster

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The Hardest Column I've Ever Had to Write

Amanda Thomsen



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That title was a bit of click bait. I've learned through coincidental mistakes that people click really fast if they think the tea is piping hot. In truth, this column is being written in the eye of the storm that is the Christmas season in a village that thinks of itself as a Hallmark town and there's another event every 12 minutes to be ready for—to have hot cocoa prepared and to have the wine mulled at the ready. I am exhausted.

I think of this particular column as the Betty Hutton/Bjork song "It's So Quiet" because by the time you're reading this I'll be tucked away, drinking tea in something cozy, dreaming and scheming about 2025. But right now it's the big horn section; the screaming; the frantic dancing. I am so dang tired.

I made all my 2024 dreams come true and it's time for a new set of weirder goals for weirder times. I'm up to the task. We're changing our hours so that we'll be closed on Wednesdays (as well as Monday and Tuesday) and where it scares me to only be open four days a week, we'll be spending Wednesdays out in the field doing consults, visits, installs and deliveries. The moment I announced this I had three customers willing to take some of that time from me.

As for the four days a week? It's a long story, but we really have become more of a destination. Wednesday sales were weak most of the year with other shops in town closed in summer, especially. I have two employees willing to do actual installs where I didn't have the capability last year. This is super exciting because not only am I giving people what they want, I'm able to pass this knowledge of how and why to these 19- and 20-year-olds that work here. As you know, it's not just digging holes.

Getting into home visits—which I never wanted to do—has been great. I realize I was absolutely burned out by visiting the homes of Chicago's wealthiest back when I worked for a big firm. The kinds of people that would make crews carry plants up 12 ft. of ladder to their rooftop decks rather than dare have us in their house. The people we had to wear surgical booties over our work boots for. Things are not like that now and it's easy, breezy, beautiful. Seriously, it's all falling into place.

Tyler, my teen-aged, right-hand man, is dipping his toe into management. He's empowered, knowledgeable and ready to delegate to other employees. The change came about naturally and it's been a shocking weight lifted off me. Does he pass on things he specifically doesn't want to do? Yes. Yes, he does. But also? He's not wrong. Someone who knows as much as he does shouldn't have to take the garbage out if someone less megawatt-sales-

guy-inclined is available. It's so lovely how organically it's all coming around. If you have a chance, find yourself a Tyler and keep him. He is spoiled, but worth it.

What else awaits me in 2025? Experimenting with ADHD medication is in the immediate future. I'm excited to see how my brain works with a little assistance. I have 400,000,000 ideas each day, but they come washing over me like Niagara Falls and wouldn't it be great to slow down enough to internalize more than a handful of them? Or maybe the ideas will stop altogether? Not afraid to spend time figuring it out. It's exciting to know one's own mind, as exciting as it could be to "remember what one was just talking about" or "remember why I came into this room to begin with."

I'd love it if you shared your big plans for 2025 with me: amanda@kissmyaster.com.

But until then, I am so, so very tired. **GP**

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://kissmyaster.com), and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Threads AND Instagram @KissMyAster.