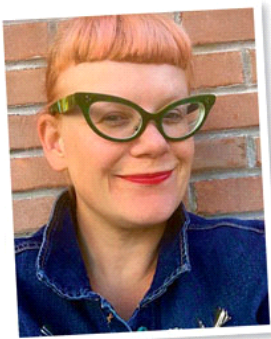


Kiss My Aster

3/1/2025

Department of the Interiorscape

Amanda Thomsen



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One thing about this job we all have is that someone will walk in off the street and assume you can ID a roadside weed using only the inaccurate adjectives they provide or assume you can tell them how to make grape jelly out of some random grapes someone found on their property.

The good thing about where I am in life and at the shop is that people have just assumed I'm interested in doing their interiorscaping. I haven't had to market that we do it at all. Apparently, there's a need and people have been finding me by just asking when they're in the shop.

We had our first interior install at the AMAZING and swanky bar next to our shop about two years ago. The owner wanted to soften the place up with lots of floor plants and tabletop planters. We installed it quickly even though the manager had his doubts; the name of the lesson is "The Bar Manager Has Seen Everything So Believe Him." I worked for Rentokil/Initial back in the day and I've done tons and tons of interior installs and have stories to tell. I thought I'd seen it all, but never have I seen plant mayhem like this. We installed tough floor plants in tall planters in spots where it looked bare; all of these were routinely tripped over (4-ft. tall at least), had drinks poured in them or hid a secret colony of unwanted garnishes underneath the careful layer of chartreuse reindeer moss. You wouldn't think people would pile their winter coats on top of a gorgeous 12-in. dieffenbachia. They did.

The tabletop planters had the moss stolen or destroyed/spread around the place and the rhizomes of the tiny ZZ plants were stabbed multiple times with high-end bamboo toothpicks. The manager had seen this chaos coming the whole time, I assumed that because it was a very fancy bar he would be wrong. We lost our steam trying to care for and replace these plants because I'm not great at out-thinking the inebriated-on-\$19-smoked-martinis crowd. The only remainders are two war-torn sansevierias that deserve ... can plants take a vacation? Why not?

The manager recently called me back over asking for hanging planters because the bar still needs softening. I hope that idea made you gasp like it did me. What could be harder to take care of than indoor hanging baskets in a busy bar? I believe I've come up with a good solution for these extremely specific problems, but sheesh. It hasn't been pretty and it's been a minute since I was gullible enough to assume something simple would just work out.

In December, a new customer buying a Christmas tree asked if I'd be interested in interiorscaping his nearby restaurant. We set a meeting and I've never worked with such a positive customer. After I drop off a ton of new plants he immediately wants more. It's a dream scenario. This time I have a maintenance contract, where I failed to do that with the neighbors that I liked too much to be official. Read: You can assume I received free drinks.

This time, I surrounded the base of each plant with bubble wrap to keep anyone but me from watering (or pouring a drink in) these plants. The potential plot hole is that I've been doing things for this restaurant fast, cheap and good. I'm sure you know of the infamous Venn diagram. I'm the unicorn. Neighhhh. Why charge him more because I can? That's not how I'm wired.

The benefit is that he continues to order more, including his exterior pots, and I can see an outdoor seating area under that crust of ice and snow we'll discuss when the time is right.

Where I've never been a very cunning or tricky person, I have learned that I can show Bar A what I'm up to at Restaurant B and, apparently, that ramps one up in laughing all the way to the bank. They each want what the other has plus eight. Good thing I've dedicated Wednesdays in 2025 to making room for these lovely unicorn commitments. **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://www.kissmyaster.com), and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter, Threads AND Instagram @KissMyAster.