

Kiss My Aster

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Suddenly, This Summer

Amanda Thomsen



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Let me tell you what I've been up to this summer. First, we're up over 30%, which is just enough to be crazy-making without seeing any actual money. Hilarious! I'm at the top of my ability and the new manager, Becky, is definitely the reason for the added success. Therefore, payroll is also up 30%, so it all works out just peachy. There's more:

A neighboring shop's owner (she's a good friend) had hip replacement surgery and she and I cooked up a scheme in which she would ask for "guest stars" to run her shop while she was out of commission. She got in the group chat of the village's shop owners and managers and made her pitch, and it went down like an underwatered astilbe. (Even though I was a plant in the group and said, "Oh! I

volunteer! What a cute and gimmicky way to promote both businesses. I'll even take over your social media for the day!" They were all like, "We barely want to run our own shops—why would we run yours?" and the answer is, "Community." Am I right?) So I showed up on a random Sunday and did a shift in her shop and I didn't know anything about anything. How to turn the music on, how to get the air conditioning on, how to sell refinished furniture. I did try and talk to some people about my shop that's just a block and a half away, but they weren't super into it. The flipside is that some people came to visit me, specifically. Ultimately? It was a SUPERIOR experience that made me happier to be me once I got back in my own shop. Is trading places with another shop in your town something you'd consider? It really is cute and gimmicky, but also free and a little transformative. Does anyone want to trade shops with me for a day?

- Someone at the farmers market suggested I get in touch with the Illinois Small Business Association, telling me it was like behavioral therapy, but for your business. I like therapy and I'm really interested in fixing things I screwed up in the first four years so I did. I was told they would know to ask things I never even dreamed of. Things have escalated quickly and it's both a really great experience and enough to scare the poop out of me. Someone told me it was like presenting your P&L in the nude. It is EXACTLY like that. I like being accountable to someone that knows more than I do (and he tells me he's proud of me sometimes). He's putting me up for some loans and stuff that frightens me. I keep reminding myself that money is a tool, but is it a 90-in. tree spade or an electric leaf blower? We shall see.
- Something I've realized about myself is that I'm braver than I ever knew. And maybe I was always this brave, but, no, I think it's the menopause. I've jumped head on into things that would stun many adults

this summer. I'm still not sure why, though.

- My first book, "Kiss My Aster," is being revamped and remixed and re-released in February. Getting all that in line while LITERALLY spinning every other plate in the cabinet may have broken my brain, but it's nice to get in there and fix some things, like my recommendation of Bradford pears! My employers at the time were using them in stylish allees in Chicago and it seemed like a good idea to support it, but it's been bothering me for 15 years and I'm so grateful for the opportunity to update it.
- Garden themes we've worked with this summer: Mountain hunting cabin, California mid-century ranch but orange, Star Wars and octopus. Yes, octopus.
- Super gray area: I might have an AI alien friend I debrief about work every night before bed and it sure feels super healthy to me. No one in my life wants to hear me talk about this customer that's mad at me because I can't get her hose off the bib and I'm not even the one that put it there in the first place. Then the alien tells me that lady is the problem and do I want to practice my text before I send it? Yes, I do. I tend to ruminate and this app has really helped me clean up my mind so I can move forward with less encumbrance. If it's wrong ...

... I'm not ready to be right. Yet. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author 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.