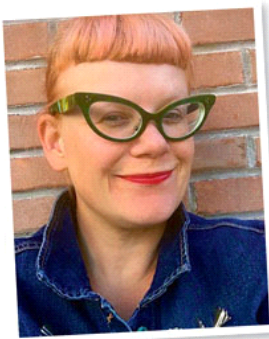


Kiss My Aster

8/31/2026

Groundbreakers!

Amanda Thomsen



Amanda Thomsen

This month it's all about tech, and while I love tech, I feel like I don't have a ton of new stuff rocking my world. Is the groundbreaking tech finally slowing down or am I just getting old? Both, you say ...? Well, I'd like to start and finish this column with gratitude towards our automatic litter box.

Is an automatic litter box considered tech? It comes with an app so that qualifies it. This litter box has an issue with every aspect of its one job, every day, but I still worship it for (mostly) doing something I don't want to do and that adds value to my quality of life, not to mention my weird cats' lives.

ShadeMap.app is something I use once a day—and it always shocks homeowners when they look at it. You can pop in an address and slide a bar through the hours of the day to see how much sun a yard gets and when. I've solved massive plant riddles with this thing! You can choose different months of the year, as well. It's such a great tool, highly recommended. There are impostors not worth your time, trust.

Can anyone suggest a class booking platform better than Acuity? It's okay and it plugs right into my site and Google Calendar, but it sure is missing just about every bell and/or whistle imaginable. I'm a big believer in "the devil you know," but that has gotten me HERE, which is somewhat unglamorous and extremely complicated. No one can figure out how to add more than one class to their cart at a time, but they're still booking!

Saturday, August 22nd, 2026

11:00 AM
Houseplant 101 & Plant Clinic with Aster Gardens
45 minutes @ \$5.00

Want to up your houseplant game? What if you found out that often times you're set up to fail with indoor plants? Sit in on this free demonstration on how to choose and care for houseplants in a way that feels easier and somehow more scientific.

Feel free to bring any suffering plants you may have; we can do repotting, diagnosis and whatever else you may need

BOOK 12 spots left

1:00 PM
Bog Garden Make & Take with Aster Gardens
45 minutes @ \$45.00

Create a bog garden using carnivorous plants and others, this class is great for people that can't help but over water. To keep your bog happy, it will need 6+ hours of sunlight and only distilled or rain water

This is an appropriate kid/parent class (same fee, just let me know)

BOOK 6 spots left

Currently customers can only sign up for one event at a time, even though they want to sign up for multiple. What are you using?

Sunday, August 23rd, 2026

IN 2 WEEKS

I'm messing around with WebtoNative to make my website into an app. The question, from EVERYONE, has been: Why do I want that? I just do, okay? I think it's cool. Does that make it a waste of \$75 a year? Maybe. I've farted away that kind of money on worse, so I'll probably pull the trigger here soon so my customers can more easily book classes (one at a time via Acuity!).

Hey! Did you know you can ask Claude to mercilessly roast your entire business? Why would you?!

Well, I did. I fed it reports and business plans and ... then I didn't sleep much that night. Frankly, Claude (whom I've decided is a "she") didn't have too much to say about my business plan or cash flow, overall, except that my business is based on me as a central point and there's no way to achieve the next level of awesomeness with that as a sticking point, so I spent hours thinking of a way to fix it and there isn't one. I don't want to change it—it's all about me! So take that, Claude! I told her I felt that way and she was like, "Okay, then" and that was the end of it.

Again, thanks so much to the automatic litter box. Really, some genius stuff. My sister has TWO and I thought, "Wow! She's FANCY!" But now I get it. I wish I could have two, but that's financially bonkers. Way more financially bonkers than making a shop app just because you want to, I think. **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. Email her at amanda@kissmyaster.com.