

Kiss My Aster

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Some Like It Hot (But I Doubt They Meant THIS Hot)

Amanda Thomsen



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Working outdoors makes us WARRIORS. We're out there with the farmers and the road crews, baking our biscuits, every day. While we have time to get used to it, our customers don't and often just can't even. How can we make things more comfortable for them? How can we make things a little cooler for us? Here are a few ideas you can read in an air-conditioned space:

Mister Fans—They make great fans that spit out a mist so fine that you feel cool but not ever wet. They start at about \$100 and while they're atop tall pillars, I'm thinking about wearing a pair as earrings.

Selling Cool Beverages—I'd buy a cool drink at the checkout, for sure, but I'd pay twice for a roaming vendor to hit me up when I'm cruising the scented geranium display. Do they have to be unique or garden-related drinks? No,

but that certainly is an opportunity set up for the grabbing.

A Place to Splash—I run with a mom crowd and I don't know any moms that can physically pass up a splash pad. It's like a magnet to a fridge. Now, an actual splash pad is a pretty big deal, but you can probably come up with something splashy and fun. Even just loaner squirt guns for the littles while they're stuck shopping with their parentals.

Actual Ice Cream—Pretty much the same as the drinks, but much naughtier and exciting.

Shade Sails—Install a shade sail (or series of them) to provide a little relief. There was a time that these were prohibitively expensive, but that's no longer the case. While you're at it, I bet you could sell a half whiskey barrel of them ...

Duluth Trading Wear—I don't know if it works, but they have all kinds of clothing that's supposed to be cooling. I have a dress from that line and I just can't say if it works. I can attest that it does a great job at keeping the sun off me.

Industrial Fans—Think about all the things they might use to cool: Lollapalooza or a huge theme park. Really, is there any difference between your garden center and Coachella?

Every Day is “Wacky Hat Day”—If your employees are covered from the sun, they’ll be cooler and possibly have some fun. If they’re having fun, that fun is contagious. Is it a leap to suggest it may encourage your customers to also wear wacky hats? Have you MET gardener ladies? They’re just looking for a place to throw down their wacky hat prowess!

Promotional Parasols—A long time ago, a lady might keep the sun off of her by using a parasol. Parasols seem a tad bit precious for our rough-and-tumble garden centers, but we have umbrellas. Is there an umbrella that will clamp onto shopping carts to provide a little personal shade? I’m 1,000% sure there is.

Well-Timed Deliveries—I can remember being so caught up in a cycle of being overheated at the garden center that all I could eat was cucumbers and I lost 30 pounds in one month. Also, because I was in my 20s (obviously, this was really recently), I’d go out and drink all night. I was not doing well, but I looked fabulous.

Shaded Parking—There’s nothing like packing those newly purchased plants in a car that doubles as a pizza oven.

Trying to keep your staff and customers comfortable is usually way out of your control, but there’s always a way to make an effort. Sometimes that effort is all you need to be a little cooler. **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author. Her blog is planted at KissMyAster.com and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.