

## Kiss My Aster

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# Strike Up the Band, the Millennials are Here!

*Amanda Thomsen*

I'm Mother Nature's baby. I've spent my life outside noticing things. I take note of patterns, anomalies, failures, excesses and unnecessary flourishes. My brand and landscaping style deals in urban folksiness, composting, edible landscaping, natives, fixing problems with plants and thrifty problem-solving. When I was working in high-end landscaping at big fancy firms, there was no room for any of that. It was all about landscaping to portray wealth.

Nowadays, I run a VERY small landscaping consulting business on my own (on top of everything else I do). I feel like it's my duty to use these years of experience to help regular people feel better about their yards, so they feel confident and empowered over what happens in it. My core demographic is "moms that have a dream of having it all," but feel like they need to do it all themselves, all the nice stuff is out of reach and it's so overwhelming that they're giving up. If we find each other, I can step in, make a punch list of steps that are so easy they never would have thought it'd work and then coach them through to executing it.

Until recently, I've been helping families my age (Gen X) or older, but in these last two years, I've gotten Millennials (this is said like Rudolph, in the Christmas special, when Clarice kissed him)! And let me tell you ... it's AWESOME. Millennials are now having babies and buying houses. They're moving into starter homes with yards and they want ecosystems, not just trophy turf. They want to do right by the patch of Earth they just bought. They want things long range—no quick fixes. Millennials have grown up hearing of climate change, pollinators in peril, the battle over organic produce, sustainability and that children who play outside are more brilliant and well-adjusted. For me, they're the customers I've been waiting for. I couldn't be more stoked.

There are a few items and ideas I tend to "sell" to these homeowners over and over. It's my best guess that you could, too.

- Starter vegetable beds. I like raised bed kits, but I'm cuckoo for the fabric-raised bed bags. All they have to do it fill it with soil and they can grow anything, anywhere. Have signage that explains how much soil to purchase for each bag.
- I ask every homeowner to ditch the '90s look of edging pavers and go for a clean, trench-edged border. Half-moon edgers are a must-have.
- Every home has downspout issues. Homeowners believe they're going to need all this drainage work and their yard will get torn up and it's going to cost a million for something you'll never even see. You know what the cheapest and easiest way to fix that is? A rain barrel. Don't forget the Mosquito Dunks!

- A rain garden selection of plants and a hot-as-a-pizza-oven section of plants.
- They want to compost. Offer a few types of bins and maybe a build-your-own workshop. They just signed a 30-year loan, they're up for the commitment.
- They don't bat an eye at raising chickens and bees.
- Instant shade: Most people adore the idea of shade sails. I don't often see them sold at garden centers, but they could so be easily merchandised in use over shade perennials, registers and other display areas.
- Hammocks. It's like a magic word that makes wallets open.
- Container recipes that are specific to pot shape/size. They want it figured out for them, but they also don't want it to be cookie cutter.

So much mud has been slung at this massive demographic and I just see this massive opportunity to sell ideals we've been talking about since forever. Truly, many Millennials don't want yards—they want to live outdoors. I think that's something to celebrate. **GP**