

Kiss My Aster

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“I Can’t Remember What it’s Called, But it Has Green Leaves”

Amanda Thomsen



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Back in April, I saw a Facebook post that gave me giggles. It was a reader board in front of a garden center that was lightly poking fun at customers. It really made me take notice because it was just SO DARN CLEVER! On one level, it was just plain old funny; on a second, they’re advertising their acceptance of even the, ahem, simplest of questions. The sign said: “I can’t remember what it’s called, but it has green leaves—in stock now.”

Funny, right? I wanted to ask Renata Triveri, co-owner of Grow & Gather (Trice Farms) in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada, how that funny sign (and all the other funny signs they’ve posted) have affected business and some other assorted questions.

Kiss My Aster: Your posts with your sign are brilliant, in that you use them to lure in local traffic AND ALSO you share them on social media. You use them to be witty AND to share everyday need-to-know info. How long have the funny signs been going on?

Renata Triveri: Minutes after purchasing our little garden center in 2012, we learned a few things:

- a) We had practically no budget for traditional marketing. This stung. I was a marketing coordinator for a large garden retailer once, and my partner (Bill Hardy) managed large garden and landscape retail operations with significantly juicier budgets.
- b) Ours was (and is) a neighborhood store. Our neighbors and passersby are our primary customer base and we don’t attract loads of traffic from far afield.
- c) Advertising bone meal did sweet diddly-squat to generate attention. Plus, I was making a huge effort in retraining our customers to NOT expect a sale/bargain. Why undervalue all of our offerings by racing to the bottom with discounts?

So, if I held no weekly sales, what does a girl put on the reader board? I tend to be a bit cheeky in real life, and admittedly, I get a giggle out of the lowest form of humor. So I started posting silly puns to alleviate sign boredom. We started to tell customers to pick up their bloomers and spend the day in their beds.

And then people started dropping in just to tell us we were funny. Who knew? No one gets terribly excited when perennials are on sale. But they get a good groan out of “Astilbe My Bleeding Heart” and “Keep Your Fronds Aloose and Your Anemones Closer.”

KMA: How long have you been sharing the signs on social media? I guess this is a chicken/egg type question. Which came first—the funny signs or the need to post something on social media?

RT: I can't recall when, exactly, we started posting the signs on Facebook and Instagram. We started taking pictures to remember what silly thing we'd said. If we got a good chuckle out of it, we put it online too. Sometimes, crickets. Sometimes folks respond with a giggle or eye-roll emoji. Once in a while, we cause a stir.

But our best shot poked fun at that customer who every garden retailer secretly rolls their eyes at ... Fortunately, our customers laughed at that, too. And so did other retailers. I've seen “I don't remember what it's called, but it has green leaves—in stock now!” on a number of signboards across North America. How cool is that?

KMA: Can you trace any measurable changes in business due to either the sign or sharing the sign on SM?

RT: Measuring results is hard. By putting pics of our signs online, I can tell you which get the most laughs. “It has green leaves” reached 70,882 people and had well over 8,000 engagements on Facebook; it was shared 467 times. The next most popular had a reach of around 4,000 people and 350 shares. (KMA note: It also got great traction on Instagram.)

I can tell you that some signs act as excellent product availability reminders. We do very well with aloe, cacti and Venus fly trap puns. Garlic planting reminders are helpful, too.

All I need from the reader board is to get attention every day. I don't necessarily need my sign to sell a specific thing. If that's the aim, then being memorable has produced a measure of success for us. **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.