

## Kiss My Aster

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### The Trickster Challenge

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If ever there was a time for martyrdom in the garden center, it's been this spring and summer. Sales are up 4,000%, you have all new employees, your job was already hard and now you have to do it wearing a mask, you can't get the product you need fast enough (or at all) and everything is just a hot struggle sundae with extra bitterness on top.

What else can you do but throw yourself on the fire? I get it. I self-identify as a bit of a martyr; for years I put others first, working harder for others (employers, friends, complete strangers) than I'd ever conceive of working for my own benefit.

Are there martyrs working in garden centers? Let's see ... a martyr may look like someone who believes you need to severely suffer to make whatever you produce worth something. Is this you or someone you know? It's absolutely

exhausting and it tends to create an angsty environment. Many martyrs are addicted to the struggle, vowing to relax once the soul-crushing labor is over, but ... it's never over.

Obviously, there are tons of martyrs in garden centers. Our customers will never, ever know what we go through to do what we do, although we would love to show them this 80-slide presentation on exactly how soul squashing it all is. We are long-suffering and sweaty, it's what we do.

Years ago, I read Elizabeth Gilbert's book, "Big Magic," and learned about martyr energy vs. trickster energy. I recognized myself in her words and learning that this was an actual "thing" flipped a switch in my brain. I couldn't believe that this book about creativity could provide me with this foot-long burrito of information, within which lies a trick to jumpstart ending my own martyrdom. It might work for you, too.

STEP 1: Realize martyrdom is taking place. The first step to addressing a problem is ALWAYS realizing there's a problem, right?

STEP 2: The opposite of the martyr is the trickster. You can step on the clutch, pull it out of martyrdom and slam it into jokester mode anytime. You can't be both at once. Get a bit silly and the struggle fades away for a bit. Try it! Things feeling a bit heavy? Hide in the closet and jump out at the next coworker you see. Feeling a bit stifled? Get on a cart on your knees, with a broom as an oar and sing the theme from "Moana" while sailing the seas of concrete. Make a plan to "get" your coworkers or even your customers. It could be something as little as everyone wearing their shirt backwards and "forgetting" to mention it to just one coworker or only answering the phone with a British

accent. The point is that you shake things up in a fun and non-harmful way for yourself and that you bring others into the fold.

STEP 3: I'm going to push you further out of your comfort zone and ask you to capture some of that trickster energy on film and share it via social media. Do your customers need to know that you guys are having fun? You betcha! It's more fun to shop where fun grows and each hanging basket wasn't watered with your suffering (I mean, to be honest each one just IS watered with suffering, but we don't need to let them know that since they're gonna kill it any minute now anyways). I'm initiating the #tricksterchallenge and I want to see how you chase away the struggle and martyrdom of this X Games of summers. You can share on Facebook, Instagram ... or you can think about creating a TikTok account. There's some terrific plant knowledge (and lots of dancing!) being shared on TikTok right now. I HIGHLY recommend handing the use of this platform to your youngest employee.

I'll be looking out for your posts and resharing what I find. You deserve some fun—it's been rough, but you're still surviving. Let's celebrate that a little. **GP**

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