

Kiss My Aster

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Cutting Edge Sales

Amanda Thomsen



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In January's column I brought up cutting gardens, which I believe may have their moment this summer (and, hopefully, many summers in the future). Of course, it's not like the idea of a cutting garden is new; it's just that people don't often have them, or even know what they are, but would want one if they knew about it. This presents you with an easy selling opportunity if you hustle in that general direction.

If you want to sell the idea of a cutting garden, who are you selling to? That's a great question, Amanda! I think typically the mind wanders to established gardeners who've already figured it out, and are growing perennials and maybe vegetables. You're selling them something to get excited about in 2021 that they never thought about ... BUT a cutting garden is a great direction for a new gardener, too. Please keep in mind that a cutting garden can be in containers on a patio or look like the centerfold of a British

gardening magazine—the only rule is that the plants must look good if cut and thrown in a vase.

How do you sell it? Well, if it was me I'd just find some lovely cutting garden photos or photos of backyard bouquets and dangle them on social media. As in: "Hey, this could be you—have you ever thought of growing a cutting garden?" Sell it like it's the idea of the year.

Once the idea is planted, you have to teach how. This can be done on a one-by-one basis as customers come to the store—it can be a socially-distanced class or online presentation. You'll cover how to make a new bed, how to pick flowers to grow and how to organize them. In the store, you can organize an endcap or display of plants that are great for cutting (in or out of season depending on the space) and even make little "cutting flower" additions you can add to the existing signage for cutting flowers.

Other ideas?

- Consider having fresh-cut bouquets at the registers to start conversations. It's not like we don't all have those odd vases of flowers that broke, cracked off or otherwise was damaged and now they sit on the lunchroom table. Take that, make it intentional (and seasonal) and use it to sell.
- When I think of a cutting garden, I see a row of old-fashioned peonies, a few complicated rose bushes and then a crazy amount of annuals—don't forget to include annuals. This means including seeds in this sales push, but it also means including bulbs. When I just wrote the word "bulbs" I heard an angelic choir in my head. Oh, you absolutely

must have bulbs in a cutting garden. The joy and awe they'll produce will make you (and through you, me, too) look like an absolute genius organization.

- Hear me out on this one: make an infographic of plants that are safe for cats. I wince when given flowers because I know that, on my dining room table, my evil cat is just going to eat the most poisonous plant I've been gifted by some kind soul and barf all over my house. Even bouquets I cut from my own yard are always nibbled on and sometimes problematic and I know better. So go ahead and make the list. I'll start you out with a few: sunflowers, roses, bee balm, lavender, bachelors buttons, celosia, coreopsis, echinops, zinnias and amaranth.
- Frankly, every department can get in on this. To add winter interest for these cutting gardens you can go so far as to suggest evergreens and shrubs that make a great winter bouquet. Think of hollies, hazels, pines, red-twigged dogwood, hydrangea and even curly willow.

This is really an old idea, but an underused one. So why not take the Billy Ball and run with it? This is an idea that can give gardeners something to get excited about this year and I think we can all use a little of that. **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.