

## Kiss My Aster

4/1/2021

### A Welcome Distraction

*Amanda Thomsen*



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If you're anything like me, you hit the wall months ago.

I may have even hit the wall several times, only to find that there are further walls I never knew existed. With many coping mechanisms removed, no fun dinners out or having themed dinner parties at home, no garden parties, no pedicures, no flea markets or thrift stores ... and absolutely no time to myself to think through things because I'm always with my family, I've had to adapt.

I found a thing that's finally made me feel creative again, that made me want to be productive again. And even though it's pure entertainment, it's gotten my brain moving. Finally.

It's a TV show. Ugh, I know. I can't really watch TV. It seems silly to me and I have too much to do, but let me tell you, if you haven't tried watching "Escape to the Chateau," these are our kind of people. This British family buys an

abandoned, massive French chateau with no electricity or plumbing with the grand plan of turning it into a wedding event space.

They have massive budgetary issues and even bigger deadlines (the chateau is already booked for weddings; I'm sure you can feel the tension—you've been there in one way or another!). The couple works themselves extremely hard, but there's never a lick of drama. Indeed, there's usually a wink to the camera when things actually do work out. I understand the crushing weight of what they're trying to do because it seems familiar and yet it's entertaining because it's a chateau in France.

I'm not sure anyone would ever watch "Escape to the Garden Center," where a family buys a field and turns it into a horticultural super-center, but I'm starting to have hopes (and this TV show gave it to me).



One thing I think we all need a kick of, and this show delivers, is that the couple comes up with some very, very crazy ideas. Then they help each other to make them happen. He wants to build a boat, she then willingly loads the family into his rinky-dink, leaky boat and smiles about it. She buys a vintage Citroen toy store on wheels and wants it converted into a bar—he somewhat reluctantly does the work and admits later (muuuuuch later) that it was a fantastic idea. The sky's the limit when we support each other and dream big dreams.

*Pictured: Dick and Angel Strawbridge. Photo credit: Chateau Television / Two Rivers Media.*

Most appropriately to us, the chateau has a lot of outdoor living spaces. It came with a walled garden, which Dick (the guy who bought the chateau) says he bought this insane, entire undertaking (the chateau) because he'd "always wanted a walled garden." I mean, that's not a sentence you hear every day.

He revamps it and brings it back to its previous glory, while also adding a cutting garden, a wildflower garden, an orchard, outdoor play areas, glamping sites and a hot tub, all while getting into a tiff with his wife about pollarding, moat health (yeah, there's a moat), clipping greenery for garlands and wreaths, and just generally explaining to the camera why one would want these things. It speaks my language and it's my thought process that it'll speak yours.

If you're looking for a little diversion right now, but not mind-numbing at all—more like inspiring, sparking and renewing—give it a try! Before you know it you'll be commissioning a mural ... **GP**

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*Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author. Her blog is planted at [KissMyAster.com](http://KissMyAster.com) and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.*