

Kiss My Aster

9/1/2021

This is Fine

Amanda Thomsen



Amanda Thomsen

This year, if you're anything like me, there was almost no point of time where you weren't burned out.

I mean, you started the season burnt like a roux you forgot to stir constantly. The signs and symptoms of burnout are the following: reduced productivity, detachment, anxiety, feeling low, difficulty concentrating and low creativity. Oh, would you look at that. I have BURNOUT BINGO!

You know how we got here; these last two seasons have been brutal. Pandemic pressures (new customers, staffing issues, difficulties in procuring product) on top of the day-to-day stresses, like Jessica Killingbeck of K and A Greenhouse says: "Despite the fact that we still have six weeks left of our 2021 retail season, I have two suppliers that want the 2022 orders in by the middle of August, two suppliers that want the 2022 orders in by September 1, and four suppliers that want the 2022 orders in by October 1.

And since we are short staffed, I will end up doing those orders at home at night after I have already worked a full day (and then some)."

For me, the pandemic and parenting through it, as well as staggering through some major personal loss, has caused me (and so many others) a different kind of burnout than we usually think of. Regular busy season burnout is one thing, but I feel like there's more going on these last two busy seasons. Here are a few of my personal options to try to break up this cycle of burnout:

- I'm seriously considering going on a silent retreat, from three to 10 days of zero talking (also zero decision making, as your meals and sleep are scheduled out for you). I feel like that's a lot of time to dedicate, but it also seems like the reset I need. I don't just need a vacation, I need a break from making decisions. Does this resonate with you?
- Going to breakfast with friends before work. I want to talk about life with a friend over something with hollandaise sauce on it. This is something you can translate into a Wednesday Morning Breakfast Club, where you invite the crew to meet for breakfast before shop hours to share stories, complain and enrich company culture. Ultimately, finding ways to let the staff know we're all in this together is so much more than lip service right now.
- Remembering the "whys." I'm hitting botanic gardens and arboretums, private gardens and trial gardens. I need to put some horticultural gas in my tank to help me remember why I love doing this. I'll always recommend closing up shop for a day and taking your people out to see gardens in action—it's a pause that educates. This is the kind of

experience that only creates good vibes.

- Has this last year and half been a masterclass in setting boundaries for you, too? When you feel resentful, it's a sign you haven't set good boundaries for yourself. And what is burnout other than a layer cake of resentment? I'm more protective than ever of my time.

Janet Smith of S & S Landscape and Nursery Center sets an excellent example: "I'm definitely burned out ... BUT it happens every year in this business, so I'm accustomed to it and know that it is normal. There's been a difference this year though—I feel more in control of my burnout. COVID gave us the gift of setting new hours WITHOUT feeling guilty. We started closing at 4:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 3:00 p.m. Sunday after July 4. I also feel I can say 'No, sorry we can't do that' SO much easier the last two seasons without feeling pressured to fall for their pleas for help. Cutting our hours and having a few extra hours of freedom in the evening has made ALL the difference in my attitude toward my own burnout; (it's a) mental lifesaver."

How are you managing through burnout? I'd love to hear your stories. Drop 'em on me at amanda@kissmyaster.com. **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.