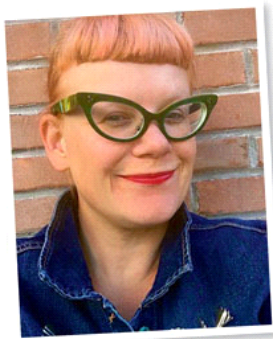


Kiss My Aster

5/1/2024

Tales From Aster Gardens

Amanda Thomsen



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Every May, I decide that you're too busy to ready a pithy column, so I try to shake it up and keep it light. I've made crosswords, Mad Libs, a quiz and more. I couldn't think of anything (except just now I thought up a word jumble! But it can wait for next May), so I'm sending you some super-relatable conversations from the shop.

Customer: "Dear Amanda, you did a design for me two summers ago. I haven't moved forward on any of it, but I did remove this yew (see photo) that you told me not to remove. Please give me a thing I can buy and plant in its place RIGHT NOW because that's what I want. Don't forget it's rather shady there and I need something low-maintenance."

Me: "The best thing for that space is a *Taxus x media Densiflora*. They're very expensive in the size you need. And you just ripped yours out."

Customer: "Do you have summer camp? My daughter would love it there."

Me: "We are a shop, though."

Rrrring

Me: "Aster Gardens!"

Her: "Yes, I'm just calling to see if you're open because I Googled you and it said that you're closed now and that you open at 11:00 a.m."

Me: "Yes, it's now 12:30 p.m. and we did open at 11:00 a.m."

Her: "I Googled you this morning."

Me: "Bet."

Customer: "I bought a rickrack cactus here a month or so ago and I'm killing it. Can I bring it back here for you to nurse back to health and then I promise to do better?"

Me: "Totally. And it's really cool that you're asking for help before it's too late! Can I ask, how often are you watering it?"

Customer: "I give it ice cubes a few times a week."

Me: *wretching*

Customer's friend: "Oh, Dolores, it's a CACTUS. Don't water it with ice cubes and water it, like, once a month."

Me: stops wretching "She's right you know."

Rrrring rrrring

Us: "Aster Gardens."

Customer: "I'd like to buy a Christmas tree—how much are they?"

Us: "Ma'am it's January 6—we have five leftover trees and they are free."

Her: "Well, I just can't drop EVERYTHING and come in today! Can you put my name on one?"

Us: "I can assure you that's not necessary."

Her: "PUT MY NAME DOWN. It's CAROL!!"

Us: "You got it, Carol."

Customer: "Hello, I'm looking for a plant for my sunroom."

Me: "Oh, fun! All our plants that enjoy a lot of sun are over here. So many really fun options for sunrooms!"

Her: "Let me show you a photo."

Me: "Hmm, that's not what I think of when I hear 'sunroom.' What direction does it face?"

Her: "Northeast. I call it my sunroom because a single beam of light shines through a sliver of the blackout curtains over the one solitary window at 6:45 a.m."

Customer: "Plant cleaning wipes. What are these for?"

Me: Really quietly waiting for her to figure it out because it's not a puzzle.

... waiting

... waiting

Me: "They are for wiping your plants' leaves."

Her: "Fake plants or real plants?"

Customer: "Do you have the kind of moss you can burn?"

Me: "Wut."

Him: "Like in Ireland? It smells so good."

Me: "No, we do not sell Irish turf."

Rrring rrrring!

Me: "Aster Gardens"

Her: "Do you have carnivorous plants?"

Me: "Definitely."

Her: "You do! How many kinds?"

Me: "Uhhh ... at least four."

Her: "I'm not going to ask you to name them because the names mean nothing to me and I won't remember them."

Me: "You're the smartest customer I've ever spoken with."

My gynecologist: "So I bet you know the answer to this! I have this fern ..."

Me: *sighs in horticulturist*

Remember to take time for yourself this season. Stay hydrated. And, hey, it's a race ON TOP of a marathon times 12 plus garden hoses. You're amazing and you'll get through it! **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is a funky, punky garden writer and author now with her own store, Aster Gardens in Lemont, Illinois. Her blog is planted at KissMyAster.com and you can follow her on Facebook, Twitter AND Instagram @KissMyAster.