

Kiss My Aster

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Written Poolside

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I have a few things that are working really well for me right now that I want to rave about. It's like I found some equation for joy at the workplace and I want to share.

The first is Acuity, the booking software. I'm allowing people to book one-on-one time with me in the shop to talk about whatever is on their mind, in 30-minute increments, and it's slicing through some of those awkward, anxiety-inducing "let-me-pick-your-brain" log jams. Last week I talked about shade gardens and raised beds, squash vine borer and runaway Tiger Eyes sumacs. Sure, there are people who are going to work on their own time and just ask 20,000 questions in line at the register, but there's this whole segment of my customers who want to do it this whole new way and it's FANTASTIC. I put in the times I'm willing to surrender to do this, they sign up online and it goes directly to my Google calendar. They come in, we do our one-on-one and it's the connection I crave in my cool, dark back room. Highly recommended, but check back with me next April ...

Next up, I'm rereading "The Pivot Year" by Brianne Wiest while on a short vacation before things get super busy because reading is something I can only do on vacation. Every page either affirms everything or burns like a freshly microwaved Hot Pocket placed directly on my cerebellum. Are you doing what your soul yearns for? I am.

Here's a quote that moves me: "It's often when you reach complete exhaustion with this view of the world that you begin to go inward and discover something solvent—the power that's within. As you begin to wake up to that power, you often overuse it. You assume you are a god into yourself, the tiny particles around us which the entire universe will bend and break and reform. You begin to shake off this illusion when you realize that the things you insisted on creating did not turn out as perfectly as you once imagined. You begin to take people into account, their timing and their needs. You start to see that you cannot see everything, and so begins the true journey of your life, which is the dance between what is yours to handle and what is yours to release."

You need to read this book. And reread it often.

Third, I cannot rave about my teenage employees more. I am so proud to know them and they're teaching me so much. Opening myself to learning from them has been a bit of an ongoing process, but I'm glad I reapply myself to being open to all aspects of them being their authentic selves. These kids are able to problem solve without the weight of all this experience, which only makes sense when it just makes sense.

I love working with them and I trust them when I'm not there. I gave my 15-year-old employee a set of keys because the 18-year-old is often a few minutes late and I don't want her stuck outside. Maybe that's an unrelated anecdote, but it feels really related and maybe even relatable ...? What a difference it would have made if an employer would have seen me at that age. What difference would it have made if adults saw you when you were a teen?

My respect to all of you who've already built a galaxy, universe or solar system. Selling great products as the best version of me is a piping hot challenge, but I'm finding that taking care of what my soul needs, which is room to think (often a somewhat dark one) and to normal some of the small stuff, and always being a benign, yet nutty, leader makes so that I'm still super stoked every day. **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.