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[54] AZALEA PLANT NAMED GODDESS

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[57] ABSTRACT

[73] Assignee: Yoder Brothers, Inc., Barberton, Ohio

An azalea plant named Goddess particularly characterized by its evergreen foliage, hose-in-hose flower form with frilled margins, dark rose pink flower color, ease of budding, uniform and dense plant habit, free branching, rapid and uniform flower response in a year round controlled program, excellent cooler tolerance and good keeping quality.

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[52] U.S. Cl. Plt./56

[58] Field of Search Plt./56, 57

1 Drawing Sheet

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The present invention comprises a new and distinct cultivar of Azalea, a greenhouse forcing type, hereinafter referred to as Goddess.

Goddess, identified as Code 1050 during the selection process, originated from a planned cross hybridization between two selected breeding lines in a controlled breeding program in Fort Myers, Fla.

The female, or seed parent of Goddess is the commercial cultivar Girard's Fuchsia, a deep reddish purple single. The male, or pollen parent is a seedling known as Code 227, a proprietary breeding line.

Goddess was discovered and selected by Wendy R. Bergman as one flowering plant within the progeny of the stated cross in January 1992, in Fort Myers, Fla.

The first asexual reproduction of Goddess was accomplished when vegetative cuttings were taken from the initial selection in April 1992, in Fort Myers, Fla., by technicians working under formulations established and supervised by Wendy R. Bergman.

Horticultural examination of controlled flowerings of successive generations of plants derived from cuttings taken from the original selection has shown that the unique combination of characteristics as herein disclosed for Goddess are fixed and retained through successive generations of asexual reproduction.

Goddess has not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. The phenotype may vary significantly with variations in environment such as temperature, light intensity and day length, without, however, any variance in the genotype.

The following observations, measurements and comparisons describe plants that were grown in Fort Myers, Fla. in a controlled greenhouse environment and following a commercial schedule.

The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined to be basic characteristics of Goddess, which, in combination, distinguish this azalea as a new and distinct cultivar:

1. A dark rose pink flower color (54A) fading to a lighter rose pink (between 54C and 54D) at old age.
2. Hose-in-hose flower form with a ruffled petal margin.
3. The flowers range in size from 7.0 to 9.0 cm in diameter with 8.0 cm the average size.
4. Compact, dense, uniform and symmetrical plant habit.
5. Fast, uniform response in a year round controlled flowering program, forcing in 25 days on average.
6. Good longevity in a simulated home environment, with flowers lasting up to three (3) weeks.
7. Excellent foliage retention and no flower bud damage when cooled for six (6) weeks with no lighting at 38° F.

The accompanying color photograph shows in perspective view the unique features of the new cultivar, with colors being as true as possible with color illustrations of this type.

Of the commercial cultivars known to the inventor, the most similar in comparison to Goddess is Solitaire disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 3,171. Goddess is similar to Solitaire in that both are pink evergreen azaleas suitable for greenhouse forcing.

Goddess differs from Solitaire in that Goddess's flowers are a darker rosier pink, have a distinct blotch, and do not possess petaloid anthers like those of Solitaire. The plant habit of Goddess is much more dense and heavily branched than that of Solitaire.

In the following description color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart. The color values were determined on Apr. 6, 1995. All readings were taken in an office under cool white fluorescent lights, facing a west window between the hours of 10:00 a.m and 2:00 p.m.

Classification:

Botanical.—*Rhododendron hybrida*, evergreen type.
Commercial.—Florist forcing pot azalea, cv. Goddess.

INFLORESCENCE

Flower (General):

Size.—7.0 to 9.0 cm.

Born.—Terminal cluster, usually four (4) per bud, ranging from three to five (3–5). Occasionally more than one bud per stem.

Form.—Hose-in-hose. Funnel-form.

Blooming habit.—Once profusely. Buds easily and uniformly in a year-round flowering program. The majority of terminal buds break color within one (1) week of the first. Flowering begins approximately 25 days after the start of forcing.

Fragrance.—Present, scant.

Corolla (Petals):

Texture.—Soft.

Substance.—Heavy.

Shape.—Rounded with undulate margin.

Color (fully open).—Generally 54A. Dark rose pink.

Upper surface: Edge: 54A. Center: 54A. Base: 54B.

Lower surface: Between 54A and 54D. Blotch: 60B.

Bud:

Size.—Medium.

Shape.—Conoidal.

Color.—Between 63A and 54A.

Bud sheath.—Light green with light brown hairs.

Calyx:

Form.—Petaloid (hose-in-hose).

Color.—63A. Lower surface: Between 63B and 63D.

Peduncle:

Length.—1.0–2.0 cm.

Strength.—Strong.

Aspect.—Pubescent.

Reproductive organs:

Androecium (stamens).—Number: Six to eight (6–8).

AntHERS: 79A. Filaments: Length: 2.0–4.0 cm. Color: Between 53C and 53D.

Gynoecium (pistil).—Stigma: 59A. Style: Length: 2.0–4.0 cm. Color: 53C. Ovary: Pubescent.

PLANT CHARACTERISTICS

Foliage:

Type.—Evergreen.

Arrangement.—Alternate.

Shape.—Elliptic to ovate.

Size.—Length: 2.5–6.0 cm. Width: 1.0–2.5 cm.

Margin.—Entire.

Color.—Immature: Upper surface: 143A. Lower surface: 144A. Mature: Upper surface: 139A. Lower surface: 146B.

Texture.—Leathery.

Tomentum.—Present on upper surface. Insignificant.

Stems:

Color.—Immature: 143D. Mature: 164A. *Tomentum:* Present, dark golden-brown. Sparse.

Plant habit: Compact, semi-upright, dense bush which is uniform and symmetrical in a six-inch (6") pot when pinched three (3) times. Total crop time to the dormant budded stage is 40–42 weeks to produce a plant approximately 30 cm in diameter and having a total height of 30–36 cm. Internode lengths vary widely from 2–30 mm on the same stem.

Branching habit: Free branching, producing three to six (3–6) breaks when a vegetative cutting is pinched.

Rooting: Roots easily in eight to ten (8–10) weeks with 75° F. soil temperature.

Budding ease: Plants produce flower buds easily and uniformly year round with the use of commercially available plant growth regulators. Natural season response has not been ascertained.

Cooler tolerance: Plants placed in a cooler as a means of breaking dormancy perform very well. Goddess is tolerant of six (6) weeks in an unlighted cooler without excessive bud damage or foliage loss.

Blooming: Plants reach the stage of 12 buds showing color in 25 days on average after the cooling treatment. This varies from 17 to 31 days depending upon time of year.

Shelf life: When plants are moved to an office or home environment at the stage of eight (8) open flowers, they maintain an attractive appearance for three (3) weeks on average.

It is claimed:

1. A new and distinct cutliver of azalea plant named Goddess, as described and illustrated.

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U.S. Patent

Oct. 14, 1997

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