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Jones et al.

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(54) ***DIASCIA* PLANT NAMED 'AURORA APRICOT'**

(50) Latin Name: ***Diascia×hybrida***
Varietal Denomination: **Aurora Apricot**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A new cultivar of *Diascia* plant named 'Aurora Apricot' that is characterized by compact plant habit and elongated racemose inflorescences consisting of many apricot-colored flowers with contrasting orange-red eyes is disclosed.

2 Drawing Sheets

Genus and species: *Diascia×hybrida.*
Variety denomination: 'Aurora Apricot'.

BACKGROUND OF THE NEW PLANT

The present invention relates to a new and distinct cultivar of twinspur, which is grown as a spring and summer flowering annual or perennial plant for use in containers, borders and in mass landscape planting. The new cultivar in the genus *Diascia* will be referred to hereinafter by the cultivar name 'Aurora Apricot'. This application is co-pending with the related cultivars *Diascia* 'Aurora Light Pink' and *Diascia* 'Aurora Dark Pink' which have been hybridized and selected in the same manner.

The inventors have been interested and have collected plants of the genus *Diascia* since the early 1990s. *Diascia*, which is native to southern Africa, provides showy annual and perennial (in mild climates) plants whose predominant flower color range in nature is in the range of soft to dark pink, also white, lavender-pink, salmon and apricot. Plants of *Diascia* which are raised from seed are inherently variable in growth habit, ranging from loose, weak plants with brittle stems to plants with significantly shorter internodes. Various breeding programs, including the inventors', have aimed to develop improvements in plant habit and also an extension of the color range into the deep pink, red or orange shades and ideally with very similar compact habits for each color.

Commencing in or around 1998, the inventors commenced a breeding project to develop a uniform series of *Diascia* which exhibit flowers held erect and above the foliage, in a range of colors, and borne on plants with compact habit. By 2003, the inventors had isolated certain seedlings which presented stiffly held longer racemes of individual flowers. Although the inventors deliberately selected and set aside parents for their presumed usefulness for immediate and future hybridization, the parents of 'Aurora Apricot' are not known. The inventors estimate that approximately thirty generations of crosses preceded the selection of 'Aurora Apricot'

in 2009. 'Aurora Apricot' was selected by the inventors as an individual seedling within a population of many hundreds of seedlings which flowered in that year. 'Aurora Apricot' was selected by the inventors for its combination of qualities including length of inflorescence, arrangement of individual flowers within the inflorescence, clarity of flower color, compatibility and uniformity with other candidates for a related series.

The first asexual propagation of 'Aurora Apricot' was conducted in 2009 by the inventors at their nursery in Newport, Gwent, England. The method of asexual propagation used was vegetative tip cuttings. Since that time the unique and distinguishing characteristics of 'Aurora Apricot' have been determined stable, fixed, and reproduce true to type in successive generations of asexual reproduction.

SUMMARY

The following traits have been repeatedly observed and represent the characteristics of the new *Diascia* cultivar 'Aurora Apricot'. 'Aurora Apricot' has not been tested under all possible conditions and phenotypic differences may be observed with variations in environmental, climatic, and cultural conditions, without however, any difference in genotype.

1. 'Aurora Apricot' exhibits compact habit.
2. The inflorescence of 'Aurora Apricot' consists of individual flowers which are arranged in an elongated raceme.
3. The quantity of flowers which are borne in a single inflorescence during its life ranges between 20 and 30, of which 8 to 15 are fully open at any one time.
4. 'Aurora Apricot' exhibits spires of apricot colored flowers.
5. Each flower of 'Aurora Apricot' exhibits a dark orange-red eye.
6. 'Aurora Apricot' blooms profusely spring through fall.

7. 'Aurora Apricot' exhibits glossy mid green colored foliage.
8. 'Aurora Apricot' is propagated using the method of vegetative tip cuttings.
9. 'Aurora Apricot' is fast growing. A spring planted young plant fills and flowers in a 10.0 cm container in six to eight weeks from spring transplanting.
10. The cultural requirements of 'Aurora Apricot' are well-draining soil, full sun, and regular water.
11. 'Aurora Apricot' is suitable for use in raised beds, borders, hanging baskets, and patio containers.
12. 'Aurora Apricot' is hardy to USDA Zone 8.

COMPARISON WITH KNOWN VARIETY

'Aurora Apricot' is a distinct variety of *Diascia*. 'Aurora Apricot' is most similar to the *Diascia* plant named 'Aurora Dark Pink' (U.S. Plant patent application Ser. No. 13/986,681). Differences between the two varieties are flower color with 'Aurora Apricot' having apricot colored flowers and 'Aurora Dark Pink' having dark pink colored flowers.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying color drawings FIG. **1** and FIG. **2** illustrate the overall appearance of the new *Diascia* cultivar 'Aurora Apricot' showing the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type. Colors in the drawings may differ from the color values cited in the detailed botanical description, which accurately describes the actual colors of the new variety of *Diascia* named 'Aurora Apricot'.

The drawing labeled as FIG. **1** depicts one whole plant of 'Aurora Apricot' which is growing and flowering in mid-summer out of doors in Newport, Gwent, England. The illustrated plant was started from a rooted cutting approximately 10 months previously and maintained in a frost-free greenhouse until placing outdoors in spring.

The drawing labeled as FIG. **2** illustrates the racemose inflorescence of 'Aurora Apricot' together with the individual apricot colored flowers and contrasting orange-red eyes.

Both drawings have been made using conventional photographic techniques and although colors may appear different from actual colors due to light reflectance, they are as accurate as possible by conventional photography.

BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANT

The following is a detailed description of the new *Diascia* cultivar 'Aurora Apricot'. Data was collected April 2013 in Santa Barbara, Calif. from five month old plants planted in the garden border. The color determinations are in accordance with the 2007 edition of The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart, except where general color terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used. The new *Diascia* variety named 'Aurora Apricot' has not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. Phenotypic differences may be observed with variations in environmental, climatic, and cultural conditions, without however, any difference in genotype.

Botanical classification:

Genus.—*Diascia.*

Species.—× *hybrida.*

Denomination.—'Aurora Apricot'.

Common name.—Twinspur.

Commercial classification.—Annual or perennial.

Plant uses.—Suitable for use in containers, borders and mass landscape plantings.

Cultural requirements.—Provide well-draining soil, full sun and regular water. Trimming when young will encourage strong basal branching.

Hardiness.—Hardy to USDA Zone 8.

Parentage.—Unnamed and unreleased seedlings from the inventors' breeding program.

Plant description:

Blooming seasons.—Spring, summer and fall.

Plant habit.—Compact habit.

Plant form.—Mounding form.

Plant vigor.—Vigorous.

Plant propagation method.—Propagated using the method of vegetative tip cuttings.

Production time.—Six to eight weeks are required to produce a flowering plant in a quart or 10 cm diameter container. Ten to twelve weeks are required to produce a full flowering plant in a 1 gallon or 15.0 cm diameter container.

Plant height (foliage mound).—12.0 cm to 15.0 cm.

Plant height (including flowers).—25.0 cm to 35.0 cm.

Plant width.—Plant is 25.0 cm to 30.0 cm.

Root system.—Fine and fibrous roots.

Resistance and susceptibility to diseases and pests.—No resistance or susceptibility to pests or disease is known to the inventor.

Time to develop roots.—10 to 14 days are needed to develop roots on an initial cutting.

Special considerations.—Encourage new branching by periodic pruning.

Stem: Stem produces 3 to 4 branching stems at 1.0 cm above surface. Each branching stem produces 1 to 2 nodal sub-branches.

Flowering stems per plant.—Approximately 100 during the year.

Stem shape.—Quadrilateral.

Stem color.—RHS 138B.

Stem dimensions.—15.0 cm in length, 4.0 mm in diameter.

Internode length.—Ranges from 2.0 cm to 4.50 cm.

Stem surface.—Smooth, glabrous.

Foliage:

Number of leaves per branching stem.—8 to 10.

Leaf arrangement.—Opposite.

Leaf division.—Simple.

Leaf shape.—Cordate.

Leaf base.—Cordate.

Leaf apex.—Acute.

Leaf margin.—Denticulate, teeth spaced at 5.0 mm, depth 1.0 mm.

Leaf venation pattern.—Pinnate.

Vein color (adaxial surfaces).—RHS 138A.

Vein color (abaxial surfaces).—RHS 138A.

Leaf surface (both surfaces).—Glabrous.

Leaf color (adaxial surface).—RHS 138A.

Leaf color (abaxial surface).—RHS 137B.

Leaf dimensions.—3.5 cm in length, 2.0 cm in width.

Leaf attachment.—Sessile.

Inflorescence and flowers:

Inflorescence type.—Terminal raceme.

Quantity per plant.—5 to 8 on a five-months-old plant.

Inflorescence dimensions.—15.0 cm in length; 4.5 cm in diameter.

Quantity of flowers developed during inflorescence life.—20 to 30 .
Quantity of fully open flowers at any time per inflorescence.—8 to 15.
Rate of flower opening.—3 to 4 days from first color to fully open flower.
Flower description.—Type, solitary.
Flower aspect.—Outward-facing.
Flowers persistent or self-cleaning.—Self-cleaning.
Flower shape.—Personate with twin calcars (spurs).
Flower dimensions.—1.8 cm in height, 1.5 cm in width, 1.0 cm in depth.
Flower color.—Predominantly RHS 29C to RHS 29D with eye RHS 43A.
Petals.—5, basally fused.
Petal shape.—Orbicular.
Petal surface.—Glabrous.
Petal margin.—Entire.
Petal apex.—Obtuse.
Petal base.—Rounded.
Petal dimensions (*uppermost pair*).—8.0 mm in height, 6.0 mm in width.
Petal dimensions (*lateral pair*).—15.0 mm in height, 12.0 mm in width.
Petal dimensions (*lowest*).—18.0 mm in height, 18.0 mm in width.
Petal color (*adaxial surface*).—RHS 29C fading to RHS 29D.
Petal color (*abaxial surface*).—RHS 29C becoming RHS 31B at base.
Pollinator guide spot.—Located at base (where fused) of uppermost petals; diameter 3.0 mm, color RHS 10A.
Corolla window color.—RHS 155C.
Corolla window dimensions.—2.0 mm in length and 2.0 mm in width.
Calcar.—2 in number.
Calcar surface.—Glabrous.
Calcar dimensions.—6.0 mm in depth and 2.0 mm in diameter.
Calcar color.—RHS 31B.
Bud shape.—Globose.
Bud surface.—Stipitate-glandular.
Bud color (*immediately prior to cracking color*).—RHS 146A.
Bud dimensions.—4.0 mm in length and 4.0 mm in width.
Peduncle color.—RHS 146B becoming RHS 173B above uppermost leaf node.
Peduncle dimensions.—5.0 cm to 8.0 cm in length, 1.5 mm in diameter.
Peduncle shape.—Quadrilateral.
Peduncle surface.—Stipitate-glandular.
Pedicel color.—RHS 173B.
Pedicel dimensions.—0.8 cm in length, 0.5 mm in width.
Pedicel shape.—Cylindrical.
Pedicel surface.—Stipitate-glandular.

Calyx:

Calyx shape.—Stellate.
Calyx color.—RHS 146B.
Number of sepals.—5, unfused.
Sepal color (*adaxial and abaxial surfaces*).—RHS 146B.
Sepal surface.—Stipitate-glandular.
Sepal shape.—Oblanceolate.
Sepal dimensions.—4.0 mm in length and 0.75 mm in width.
Sepal apex.—Acute.
Sepal base.—Truncate.
Sepal margin.—Entire.
Blooming months.—Flowers bloom April through November.
Lastingness of flower.—An individual flower lasts from 4 to 6 days on the plant.
Flower fragrance.—None.

Reproductive organs:

Stamens.—4.
Stamen color.—RHS N186C.
Stamen surface.—Stipitate-glandular.
Stamen dimensions.—4.0 mm in length and 0.50 mm in width.
Anthers.—Tiny, ellipsoid, less than 1.0 mm in length, width; color RHS 7C.
Quantity of pollen.—Slight.
Color of pollen.—RHS 7C.
Pistil (*style and stigma*).—Tiny protrusion, mid brown, less than 1.0 mm in height.
Ovary.—Superior, globose, 1.0 to 2.0 mm in diameter, color close to RHS 151C.
Seed.—Found occasionally, round, diameter 1.0 mm, color mid brown.

We claim:

1. A new and distinct cultivar of *Diascia* plant named 'Aurora Apricot' as described and illustrated herein.

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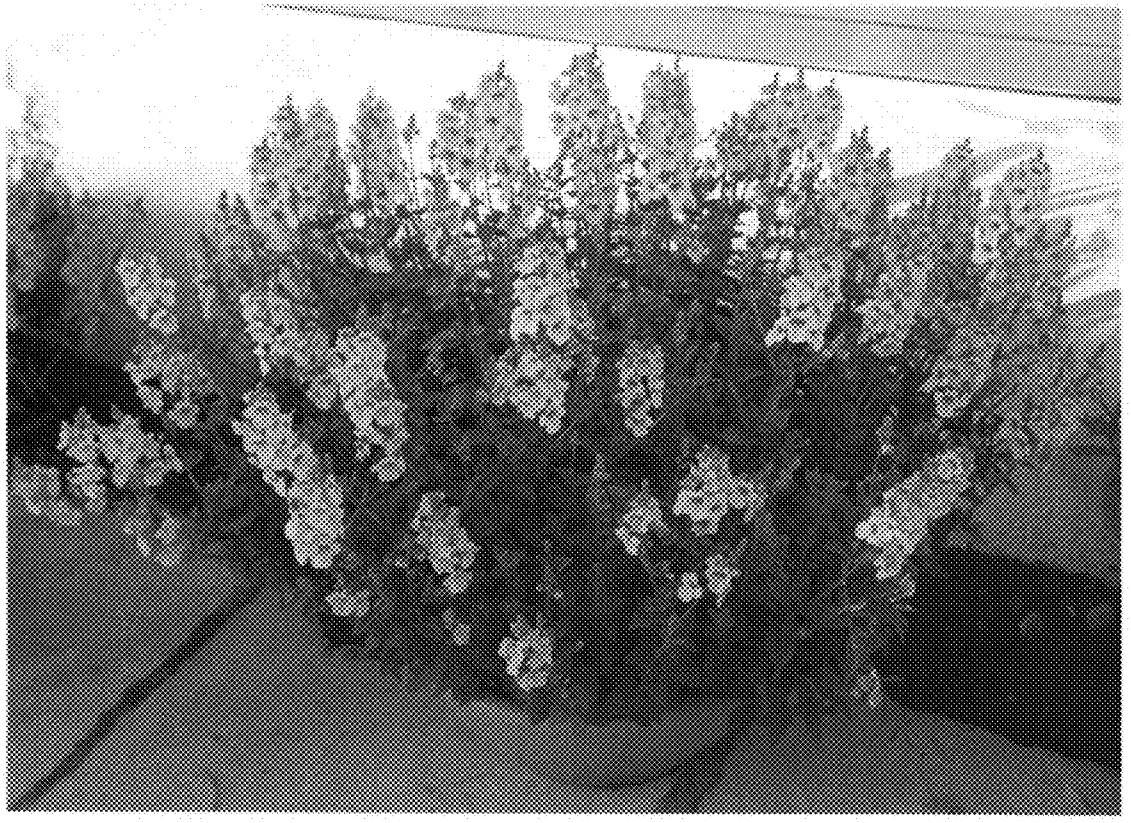

FIG. 1

FIG. 2