

Diascia barberae J.D. Hooker
(*Diascia cordata*)

Twinspur

Other Common Names: Barber's Diascia, Diascia.

Family: *Scrophulariaceae*.

Cold Hardiness: Cold hardy to USDA zone 7 (some reports of 5, although this may actually be mistaken related species or hybrids), but not tolerant of summer heat in our region; hence it is used here as a winter or transition season annual.

Foliage: Evergreen or dying to the ground in cold climates; opposite; simple; broadly ovate; ½O to 1O long; palmately veined or nearly so; margins shallowly toothed to nearly entire; tip acute to obtuse; base rounded to cordate; glabrous; sessile to the stem; medium glossy green to a hint of blue-green in color.

Flower: Small upturned terminal racemes which are profusely borne; individual flowers two-lipped, the upper lip in four lobes, the lower lip in a single larger recurved lip; individual flowers small, ½O to ¾O in diameter, but numerous; perfect; mostly shades of pink to mauve, some pale salmons can be seen; extreme interior of the throat is usually yellow; pretty and blooming over an extended season.

Fruit: not ornamental.

Stem / Bark: Stems — green turning brown; four-sided; slender; smooth; Buds — foliose; very tiny; < 1/16O long; green; Bark — not applicable, herbaceous; older stems smooth and brown in color.

Habit: Twinspur is a sprawling herbaceous perennial or annual 6O to 12O tall spreading 12O to 18O (24O) in diameter; overall texture is medium-fine.

Cultural Requirements: Full sun to partial shade; plants will last later into the summer in partial shaded locations; requires a well drained soil, but is not overly drought tolerant; apply regular fertilization and irrigation to maintain bloom, but avoid over-watering; deadheading may encourage additional blooms, but is not required.

Pathological Problems: None serious; root rots in poorly drained locations; slugs and snails in cool wet weather.

Ornamental Assets: Low growth habit; clean foliage; profusion of delicate flowers; cool season color.

Limitations & Liabilities: Inability to tolerate extreme summer heat.

Landscape Utilization: Bedding, containers; hanging over low walls or in hanging baskets; cool season temporary groundcover; rock gardens; add to our list of cool and transition season color plants.

Other Comments: The genus name is thought to be derived from the Greek word "diaskeo" which means to adorn; the specific epithet honors St. Barbara; barely known in the US trade ten years ago, now a promising species for winter and spring color in our region.

Native Habitat: South Africa.

Related Taxa: *Diascia fetcaniensis* O.M. Hilliard & B.L. Burt (rose pink to salmon flowers), *Diascia integerrima* G. Bentham (rose-pink flowers), *Diascia rigescens* O.M. Hilliard & B.L. Burt (rose-pink to copper-pink flowers, some variegated foliage forms) are also cultivated and used in breeding programs; hybrid cultivars are available from several species, but most are more or less similar varying in flower color and to some extent in heat tolerance.

References: Clausen, 1995; Clausen and Ekstrom, 1989; Cooke, 1998; Hogue, 1999.