

Cultural Details: **Diascia**

Up to now Diascias have generally been cutting propagated. However we now have available a series of royalty-free seed raised types, the Asca Series, which shows similar properties of continuous production of masses of flowers, with less risk of importing pest and disease onto the nursery. They are ideal for use in hanging baskets and hanging pots.

Diascias are straightforward to raise from seed.

Programming the Crop

Sow February to March, for flowering plants in May and June. Sell either as part of a mixed basket, as a single subject in a hanging pot, or in an 8-10cm pot earlier on as a basket plant.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the small seeds (4,000 per gram) onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Sow in seed trays, or in plug trays at 2 seeds per station. Cover seeds with a thin layer of vermiculite, and cover the trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 14 days at 18-20°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

Grow at 15-18 °C. As soon as the plants are large enough to handle, prick out into a large-celled plug tray. Grow on at around 15 °C . Once they have filled the cell, they are ready for incorporation into hanging baskets, or potting up as required. A balanced liquid feed should be applied as plants establish in the pot, i.e. when roots are visible at the base of the pot.

Pest and Disease

Maintain good air movement through the crop, and water in the morning rather than the evening to keep the foliage dry and lessen attack by Botrytis. Pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops to avoid damping-off diseases, and check for the presence of pests such as aphids, spraying accordingly. Diascias in general do not give many pest and disease problems.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.