

Q&A 12.12.2016 Lions tail

QUESTION: A caller to the Master Gardener office would like to know how to take care of Lion's Ear (*Leonotis leonurus*), after it has finished blooming? Should it be cut back? And if so, when should they cut it back?

ANSWER: *Leonotis leonurus* is a beautiful broadleaf evergreen large perennial with orange flowers native to South Africa. It also known as lion's tail and wild dagga, and is a plant species in the Lamiaceae family. It appreciates well-drained, loamy soil with plenty of compost. It is drought tolerant and can take full sun. Lion's Ear can typically survive temperatures down to 20 degrees F but may freeze back and come back from the roots in the spring when exposed to temperatures in the low 20s.

If you don't like the look of faded flowers, you can cut the flower stems back by about half in the fall. Otherwise, you can leave them until late winter or early spring and then cut back.

In a cold winter, the plant may freeze and the foliage will turn brown. Wait until late winter to cut the dead vegetation down, just above live growth. Cover the roots with a 1-inch thick layer of mulch. Mulch the roots, but don't cover the crown of the plant. Covering the crown could cause the plant to rot. The plant should resprout with new growth from "hardened wood" in the spring.

During a warmer winter, the plant may remain green all winter. However, in order to stimulate new growth for the next season, cut the plant by about half in the early spring.

The Shasta Master Gardener Program can be reached by phone (530) 242-2219 or email mastergardeners@shastacollege.edu. The Gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners questions using information based on scientific research.