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*Leonotis ocymifolia*

[Synonyms : *Leonotis leonotis*, *Leonotis leonurus*, *Phlomis ocymifolia*]

**LION'S EAR** is a shrub. Native to South Africa it has small, orange (occasionally cream) flowers.

It is also known as Cape dagga, Drug lion's ear, *Lejonöra* (Swedish), Lion's tail, *Løveøre* (Danish), *Löwenohr* (German), *Löwenschwanz* (German), Minaret flower, *Queue de lion* (French), Red dagga, Wild dagga, *Wilde dagga* (Afrikaans), and Wild hemp.

The flowers yield plentiful nectar that attracts sunbirds.

A resinous dark green substance can be extracted from the leaves.

*Ocymifolia* is made up of the genus name *Ocimum* and Latin *-folia* (leaved) components meaning 'with basil-like leaves'.

Locally familiar to the Hottentots the leaves (which are not narcotic) are dried and smoked, and create a mildly euphoric state.

Records indicate that lion's ear was being cultivated in the Netherlands by at least 1663.

According to some authorities the plant was only introduced to Britain in about 1712.

Medicinally, lion's ear has been used in the past in its native habitat by both local tribes and settlers. A decoction of leaves has been employed in remedies for epilepsy, some forms of asthma, regulating periods, coughs, colds and snake bites. The resinous extract has been used to treat leprosy, and an infusion of leaves and flowers has been applied to various skin ailments and taken for piles and tapeworm.