

Opuntia ficus-indica

COMMON NAME

prickly-pear

FAMILY

Cactaceae

AUTHORITY

Opuntia ficus-indica (L.) Mill.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Beaches and Coastal places

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Large cactus to about 5 m high, often with thick cylindrical trunk, and drooping habit on larger plants. Each stem segment grows to about 30 cm long, is flattened, egg-shaped and attached at the pointy end. One to six spines emerging from holes in the segments. Yellow flowers up to 7 cm diameter are produced on the margins of the stem segments. Fruit up to 7.5 x 3.5 cm, fleshy and can be yellow, orange or red.

SIMILAR TAXA

Can be distinguished from *O. monocantha* by the blue-green stems, up to 6 spines in each cluster and the completely yellow flowers. *O. robusta* is also similar, but has spines in clusters of 1-12, and the segments are almost completely round.

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

LIFE CYCLE

Long-lived perennial shrub. Reproduces vegetatively and seed. Seeds are dispersed by people, birds and gravity.

YEAR NATURALISED

2000

ORIGIN

Mexico

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

Salt and sandy soils

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/opuntia-ficus-indica/>



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