

Opuntia monacantha

COMMON NAME

Drooping prickly pear

FAMILY

Cactaceae

AUTHORITY

Opuntia monacantha (Willd.) Haw.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

OPUMON

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

HABITAT

Terrestrial. Sandy beaches and coastal places.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Large cactus to about 4 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 (can be elongated), and attached at the pointy end. One or two spines emerging from holes in the segments. Yellow flowers up to 9 cm diameter with red tinges are produced on the margins of the stem segments. Fruit up to 7.5 x 3.5 cm, fleshy and reddish purple.

SIMILAR TAXA

At least 2 other large *Opuntia* appear to be naturalised in New Zealand. *O. monacantha* can be distinguished from *O. ficus-indica* as it never has more than 2 spines per cluster, and stems are green. *O. ficus indica* has 1-6 spines per cluster, and is blue-green. *O. robusta* is also sparingly naturalised, this species has massive circular segments up to 40 cm diameter.

FLOWERING

February, March, April, May

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

YEAR NATURALISED

1855

ORIGIN

S. Brazil, Argentina

Reason For Introduction

Ornamental

Reproduction

Vegetative spread and seed

Seed

many seed produced.

Dispersal

People, birds, soil movement.

Tolerances

Very tolerant of salty coastal sites.



MORE INFORMATION

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