

Opuntia ficus-indica

COMMON NAMES

prickly-pear

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Large cactus to about 5 m high, often with thick cylindric 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. monacantha* 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.

HABITAT

Beaches and Coastal places

GENUS

Opuntia

FAMILY

Cactaceae

AUTHORITY

Opuntia ficus-indica (L.) Mill.

YEAR NATURALISED

2000

ORIGIN

Mexico

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental

TOLERANCES

Salt and sandy soils

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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



Opuntia ficus-indica. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Robinson Crusoe Island, Chile. Photographer: John Sawyer, Date taken: 01/05/2010, Licence: CC BY-NC.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

27 May 2026