



## Weed Management Information

### Prickly pears

**Common names:** Tiger pear, wheel cactus, common prickly pear, erect prickly pear, drooping prickly pear, devil's rope pear

**Botanical name:** *Cylindropuntia* species, all *Opuntia* species (excluding *O. ficus-indica*)

**Weed Class:** Class 4 noxious weed

**Legal requirements:** The growth of the plant must be managed in a manner that reduces its numbers, spread and incidence and continuously inhibits its reproduction and the plant must not be sold propagated or knowingly distributed.

#### Control options

**Manual control:** When an infestation is small, physical removal of plants and ploughing to bring the roots to the surface, followed by burning of the plants can provide effective control. Care must be taken to collect and treat all segments and fruit. Site inspections should be undertaken annually for several years and any new growth should be treated. Any discarded plant parts will re-grow.

**Fire:** Plants are not easily burnt so combustible material should form the base of the fire.

**Pasture management:** After removal of all parts of the plant, cultivation and establishment of vigorous pasture is essential.

**Chemical control:** Read the product label and follow all label instructions carefully before using any herbicide. Use a product that is registered for use in NSW to control prickly pear in the particular situation in which you need to use chemical control, eg. in non-cropping areas. Consult the product label for detailed information. Infestations treated with herbicide should be rechecked for several years and herbicide applied to any new growth. Please observe all environmental and safety cautions that are stated on the label.

**Biological control:** The larvae of the cactoblastis moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Bergroth), tunnel into the cladodes and reduce them to a rotting mass. This moth decimated infestations of prickly pear in Queensland and northern NSW after it was introduced in the 1920s. A number of plant pathogens attack prickly pear, including cochineal and bacterial soft rot. These biological control agents will not eradicate prickly pear and are slow to spread but can reduce the size and density of infestations. They may be suitable for use in infestations where other control methods are inappropriate.

#### Description

An erect shrub to 1 m (rarely to 2 m) high.

**Stem:** Lower segments may be thickened and trunk-forming on older plants while flattened upper segments are up to 40 cm long and up to 25 cm wide.

**Leaves:** True leaves are shed early and stem segments are often incorrectly referred to as leaves.

**Flowers:** Yellow flowers about 6 cm wide, mostly on the margins of the fleshy segments. Flowers late spring

to summer.

**Fruit:** Fruit are egg-shaped with a depressed top, purple when ripe and edible. Seeds pale brown, to 5 mm long.

**Dispersal:** Spread by seed or vegetatively by segments that root where they contact the ground.



**Common prickly pear (Rocky Hall) showing effects of black fungus**

BVSC



**Tiger pear, Brogo**

JR Hosking

**For further information:** Councils Vegetation Officers Ph: (02) 6499 2222

**Helpful websites** [www.southeastweeds.org.au](http://www.southeastweeds.org.au)  
[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/pests-weeds/weeds)

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