

# *Opuntia puberula*

Prohibited invasive plant

Look. Report. Protect. 13 25 23



- It is illegal to keep, cultivate, transport or sell *Opuntia puberula* in Queensland.
- A multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 2 m high, sometimes with a small trunk.
- Pads are elliptic to obovate shaped, light green, 9–22 cm long, 5–10 cm wide with numerous areoles.
- Flowers are yellow, 5–7 cm wide. Fruit are reddish-purple, egg-shaped, 5–7 cm long.
- Early detection and reporting helps protect Queensland's natural environment.

## Description

Native to South America, *Opuntia puberula* is an erect, spreading, multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 2 m high, often developing a small trunk up to 10 cm in diameter. The pads are light green, 9–22 cm long, 5–10 cm wide covered with numerous areoles (small round cushion-like area). Each areole has 1–3 spines that are 5–17 mm long, usually bent, 0.5–0.7 mm wide near the base with yellow, red-purple glochids (small bristles). Flowers are yellow, 5–7 cm in diameter, outer parts can be reddish. Fruit is egg-shaped, solitary or forming small chains of 2–3 fruit, 5–7 cm long, 2–2.5 cm diameter and reddish-purple in colour. It reproduces by stem fragments. It is not known if this species has viable seed in Australia.

Stem fragments are spread by becoming attached to animals, footwear and vehicles and are also dispersed in dumped garden waste. Flowering occurs mostly during spring to summer. *Opuntia puberula* prefers arid and semi-arid areas and sometimes warmer temperate regions. This invasive cactus has been detected in Brisbane, Gold Coast and Mackay areas.

## Biosecurity risk

*Opuntia puberula* is a prohibited invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. **In Queensland, it is illegal to sell *Opuntia puberula* on Gumtree, Ebay, Facebook, at markets, nurseries or any marketplace.** Prohibited species must be reported immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23. If permitted to spread, this invasive cactus could invade vast areas, much like prickly pear cactus.

## What should I do?

If you think you have seen *Opuntia puberula*, report it immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or scan the QR code to access our reporting web page. Until an authorised officer contacts you, please take reasonable and practical steps to prevent *Opuntia puberula* from spreading.

## More information

Contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](https://biosecurity.qld.gov.au).

