

Prohibited and restricted cacti in Queensland

Opuntia, *Cylindropuntia*, *Austrocylindropuntia* and harrisia cactus species



Blind cactus (*Opuntia rufida*)



Bunny ears (*Opuntia microdasys*)



Eve's pin cactus (*Austrocylindropuntia subulata*)



Drooping tree pear (*Opuntia monacantha*)

There are many low maintenance and attractive cacti that can be a great addition to the garden. However, growing, keeping and selling some cacti is illegal and penalties may apply. Be sure to check before you plant, sell or buy any cactus.

There are no cacti that are native to Australia. Cacti are native to the Americas with many species posing a significant environmental, agricultural, social and human health threat to Queensland. Some cactus species have become widely established invasive plants in Queensland, including the infamous prickly pear.

To protect Queensland's agricultural industries and native flora and fauna, strict biosecurity laws regulating the possession, propagation and distribution of various ornamental cacti species are enforced. If allowed to spread, these cacti have the potential to spread over considerable areas of Queensland.

In Queensland it is illegal to sell invasive cacti on Gumtree, eBay, Facebook Marketplace, at markets, nurseries, or any marketplace.



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Penalties

Possessing and selling cacti species is monitored by Biosecurity Queensland and local governments, which has resulted in multiple detections and seizures of regulated cacti species. On-the-spot fines have been issued to sellers and growers of prohibited and restricted cacti species.

Learn what cacti are illegal to avoid penalties. By avoiding the invasive regulated species, you are helping to protect Queensland's agricultural industries and the environment.

Legal requirements

All cactus species in the genera *Opuntia*, *Cylindropuntia* and *Harrisia*, other than Indian fig (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) are regulated in Queensland. Additionally, two species of *Austrocyllindropuntia* are also regulated.

By law, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take all reasonable and practical measures to minimise the risk of these invasive cacti spreading.

Possession, propagation and distribution of invasive cacti as ornamental plants are not considered reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimize the biosecurity risks.

The following species are prohibited or restricted invasive plants under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and have been seized by Biosecurity Queensland.

Prohibited invasive cacti

- Aaron's beard cactus (*Opuntia leucotricha*)
- Blind cactus (*Opuntia rufida*)
- *Opuntia puberula* (no common name)
- Sulphur cactus (*Opuntia sulphurea*)
- Violet prickly pear (*Opuntia gosseliniana*)
- Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*)

Prohibited cacti must be reported to Biosecurity Queensland within 24 hours of sighting.

Restricted invasive cacti

- Bunny ears cactus (*Opuntia microdasys*)
- Cane cactus (*Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica*)
- Common pest pear, spiny pest pear (*Opuntia stricta*)
- Coral cactus (*Cylindropuntia fulgida*)
- Devil's rope pear (*Cylindropuntia imbricata*)
- Drooping tree pear (*Opuntia monacantha*)
- Eve's pin cactus (*Austrocyllindropuntia subulata*)
- Hudson pear (*Cylindropuntia pallida* and *Cylindropuntia tunicata*)
- Jumping cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*)
- Riverina pear (*Opuntia elata*)
- Snake cactus (*Cylindropuntia spinosior*)
- Tiger pear (*Opuntia aurantiaca*)
- Velvety tree pear (*Opuntia tomentosa*)
- Westwood pear (*Opuntia streptacantha*)

There are no restrictions on keeping, growing and selling Indian fig (*Opuntia ficus-indica*).

Methods of spread

A new plant can grow from every part of a cactus. Dumping garden waste can result in cacti invading parks and bushland. Cacti species are easily spread by people selling or giving potted plants away.

Cacti can also be spread by animals, vehicles and machinery and floodwaters. The stem segments break off easily from the parent plant and have the ability to form new plants. The fruit are eaten by birds and other animals and the seeds then spread in their droppings.

Every cactus infestation in Queensland is the result of an ornamental cactus having escaped into the environment.

Habitat and distribution

Native to the Americas, invasive cacti are found in many environments and are climatically suited to all of Queensland. The adaptability of invasive cacti is what makes them a high biosecurity risk.

Hazards associated with cactus

Aside from the obvious prickly nature of cacti, some species have barbs on the spines, which make them difficult and painful to remove once lodged in the skin of people, pets and livestock.

Other species such as bunny ears cactus and blind cactus have fine glochid hairs, which appear soft but are easily dislodged from the plant and become airborne. Blind cactus got its name from the reputation of causing blindness in cattle grazing in affected pastures due to the glochids becoming embedded in their eyes.

Even the gentlest contact with cacti can cause them to become stuck in your skin or clothing causing irritation.

Reporting

The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks posed by invasive cacti.

Prior to buying any new cactus, check which species are regulated under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* by visiting biosecurity.qld.gov.au and searching for each species fact sheet.

If you believe you already have one or more of these species or other regulated cacti at your property, please contact your local government or Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

More information

More information is available from your local government or call Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

Blind cactus must be reported to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 within 24 hours of sighting

Blind cactus (*Opuntia rufida*) is a prohibited invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. You must not keep, give away, sell or release into the environment.

Blind cactus forms a dense shrub 40–60 cm high, occasionally more, composed of pad-like stems 6–15 cm long and 4–12 cm broad. There is no central stem and pads always grow in pairs giving the appearance of bunny ears.

It has no spines, but instead has numerous red-brown glochids (hair-like prickles), 2–3 mm long in dense clusters; these detach very easily on being touched, and can cause considerable skin irritation, so the plants must be treated with caution. Yellow flowers are 3 cm wide. Red-purple fruits are fleshy globular shape up to 3 cm long. Blind cactus is closely related to bunny ears cactus with red glochids instead of white or yellow glochids.



Bunny ears cactus must be reported to an authorised officer at local government or Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 within 24 hours of sighting

Bunny ear's cactus (*Opuntia microdasys*) is a category 2, 3, 4 and 5 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. You must not keep, move, give away, sell or release into the environment.

Bunny ears cactus forms a dense shrub 40–60 cm high, occasionally more, composed of pad-like stems, 6–15 cm long and 4–12 cm broad. There is no central stem and pads always grow in pairs giving the appearance of bunny ears.

It has no spines, but instead has numerous white or yellow glochids (hair-like prickles), 2–3 mm long in dense clusters; these detach very easily on being touched, and can cause considerable skin irritation, so the plants must be treated with caution. Flowers are yellow and 3 cm wide. Red-purple fruits are fleshy globular shape up to 3 cm long. Bunny ears cactus is closely related to blind cactus with white or yellow (golden) glochids instead of red-brown glochids.



Eve's pin cactus – cannot keep, give away, sell or release into the environment

Eve's pin cactus (*Austrocylindropuntia subulata*) is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. You must not keep, give away, sell or release into the environment.

Eve's pin cactus is a branching shrub up to 3 m high. Branches are 4–5 cm in diameter. Stem segments are glossy green, especially around the areoles and margins. Often more than 2 cm thick, 5–25 cm long. Wide leaves are evergreen, elongated, 30–60 or 120 mm long, curved, fleshy and persistent.

Spines are grayish-white, without papery sheath, 1–4 per areole, additional smaller ones (up to five) developing in successive years and are mostly 35–70 mm long. Flowers are reddish-pink, up to 6 cm long. Green fruit are oblong, egg-shaped, large, solitary or in small chains of 2–4, 50–135 mm long.



Variegated drooping tree pear – cannot keep, give away, sell or release into the environment

Variegated drooping tree pear (*Opuntia monacantha* var. *variegata*) is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. You must not keep, give away, sell or release into the environment.

This invasive cactus is an upright shrub growing up to 3 m high.

It has glossy pads that are variegated in colour and it has a lot of tiny nodules growing on the stems.

The pads also have spikes and the stems are very fleshy.

Yellow flowers are 6 cm wide and have red markings on the back.

The fruit is pear-shaped and 4–7 cm long with a green skin. The flesh of the fruit is red and pulpy and contains round seeds that are yellow or pale brown. The fruits have areoles with tufts of fine, barbed bristles.



Drooping tree pear – cannot keep, give away, sell or release into the environment

Drooping tree pear (*Opuntia monacantha*) is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. You must not keep, give away, sell or release into the environment.

Drooping tree pear is an erect succulent shrub that has fibrous roots and grows 2–3 m high but can reach up to 5 m high.

The branches are divided into glossy light green pads up to 45 cm long, 15 cm wide and 1.5 cm thick. The dark grey trunk grows up to 25 cm in diameter.

The areoles on the older pads have 1–5 sharp spines about 5 cm long. Small, scale-like leaves are found on areoles of very young pads and are quickly shed as the pad grows. Yellow flowers are 6 cm wide and have red markings on the back.

The fruit is pear-shaped and 4–7 cm long with a green skin. The flesh of the fruit is red and pulpy and contains round seeds that are yellow or pale brown. The fruits have areoles with tufts of fine, barbed bristles.

