

# Opuntia stricta (Haw.) Haw.

## Family:

Cactaceae

Haworth, A.H. (1812), *Synopsis Plantarum Succulentarum*: 191.

## Common name:

Common Prickly Pear

## Stem

Succulent herb or shrub usually 50-100 cm tall, sometimes reaching up to 2 m, usually sprawling and clumped. Stems consist of a series of green photosynthetic flattened, fleshy segments (cladodes). Segments elliptic to obovate, usually 10-35 cm long and 7-20 cm wide, green to dull bluish-green, surfaces hairless. Segments are dotted with areoles (small raised structures) filled with brownish woolly hairs and yellowish glochids (small barbed bristles) and may have one or two long sharp spines (2-4 cm long) or no spines.

## Leaves

Leaves are reduced to tiny cylindrical or cone-shaped structures, 4.5-6 mm long and are quickly shed from the developing stem segments. Leaves subtend areoles, usually one per areole. Stipules absent.

## Flowers

Flowers solitary and sessile on areoles along margin of segments. Flowers bisexual, actinomorphic, 6-8 cm diam. Perianth consisting of many spreading tepals inserted near apex of hypanthium, outer tepals green often with pinkish or reddish coloured markings and passing to yellow, inner tepals petaloid, yellow, more or less free. Stamens numerous, less than half as long as tepals. Ovary inferior 1-locular, style simple, stigma 5 or more lobed.

## Fruit

Fruits are a fleshy berry distributed on the margin of segments. Fruits similar to stem segments but generally smaller, more swollen in shape and purplish when mature. Fruits obovoid in outline with a depressed apex, 4-8 cm long and 2.5-4 cm wide. Fruit surface hairless with several areoles with glochids (barbed bristles). Seeds numerous, embedded in reddish or purplish pulp in the centre of the fruit, sub-globular, 4-5 mm long and 4-4.5 mm wide, yellow or pale brown in colour.

## Seedlings

Seedlings not seen.

## Distribution and Ecology

Occurs in CEQ. This species is widely distributed and common throughout the eastern parts of Australia and is also scattered throughout many other parts of the country. It is naturalised in a wide range of habitats including vine thickets. Native of tropical and subtropical America.

## Natural History & Notes

This profile information and associated coding has been adapted from Telford (1984), Harden *et al.* (2014) and Environmental Weeds of Australia (Queensland Edition).

## Synonyms

**Cactus strictus** Haw., *Miscellanea Naturalia, sive Dissertationes Variæ ad Historiam Naturalem Spectantes*: 188, (1803). **Opuntia stricta** (Haw.) Haw. var. **stricta**. Benson, L.D. *Cactus and Succulent Journal (Los Angeles)* 41: 126, (1969). **Cactus opuntia** var. **inermis** DC., *Plantarum Historia Succulentarum. Histoire des Plantes Grasses* 2: pl. 138, f. C, (1799). **Opuntia inermis** (DC.) DC, *Prodromus Systematis Naturalis Regni Vegetabilis* 3: 473, (1828). **Opuntia bentonii** Griffiths, *Report (Annual) of the Missouri Botanical Garden* 22: 25, (1912). Type: "TYPE: US 2607635 to 2607638 .. The type specimen is one prepared April 24, 1910, from a cultivated specimen, numbered 8374 D. G., and collected originally by Harmon Benton at McClenny, Florida, April 26, 1906. - Plates 1 and 2."

## RFK Code

3625



Flowers. CC-BY: APII, ANBG.



Flower [not vouchered]. CC-BY: S. & A. Pearson.



Fruit. CC-BY: APII, ANBG.



Habit. CC-BY: APII, ANBG.



Web edition hosted at <https://apps.lucidcentral.org/rainforest>