

# *Opuntia puberula*

Call Biosecurity Queensland immediately on **13 25 23** if you see this species



## *Opuntia puberula*

- 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 helps protect Queensland's agricultural industries and 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.

### Pest 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 cactus could invade vast areas, much like prickly pear cactus.

### What should I do?

If you think you have seen *Opuntia puberula*, report it to Biosecurity Queensland immediately on **13 25 23**. Until an authorised officer contacts you, take reasonable and practical steps to prevent this invasive cactus from spreading.

### Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23** or visit our website at [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au).