Aaron’s beard cactus
Call Biosecurity Queensland immediately on 13 25 23 if you see this species

Aaron’s beard cactus or arborescent prickly pear (*Opuntia leucotricha*)

- It is illegal to keep, cultivate, transport or sell Aaron’s beard cactus in Queensland.
- A multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 2.5 m high.
- Pads are light green to grey-green, obovate to nearly circular, up to 30 cm long and 26 cm wide.
- Flowers are pale yellow, 5–7 cm wide. Fruit are yellow and barrel shaped, up to 3 cm long.
- Early detection helps protect Queensland’s agricultural industries and natural environment.

Description

Native to central Mexico, Aaron’s beard cactus is a multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 2.5 m tall, often developing a small trunk up to 15 cm in diameter. The pads are light green to grey-green, minutely whitish-pubescent, hairs 0.3–0.5 mm long. Pads are 16–30 cm long, 12–26 cm wide. Each pad has white spines that are 1.5–4 cm long. There are 2–6 spines per areole, 10–18 on older cladodes. Flowers are yellow, 5–7 cm in diameter appearing in late spring–summer. Outer tepals can be reddish. Fruit is pale yellow, barrel-shaped, 2.5–3 cm long and minutely pubescent. 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. Aaron’s beard cactus prefers arid and semi-arid areas and sometimes warmer temperate regions. Aaron’s beard cactus is similar to westwood pear (*Opuntia streptacantha*) and wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*). The multitude of long whitish spines on the pads of Aaron’s beard cactus helps differentiate it from these two species.

Pest risk

Aaron’s beard cactus is a prohibited invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. **In Queensland it is illegal to sell Aaron’s beard cactus 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, Aaron’s beard cactus could invade vast areas, much like prickly pear cactus.

What should I do?

If you think you have seen Aaron’s beard cactus, report it to Biosecurity Queensland immediately on **13 25 23**. Until an authorised officer contacts you, take reasonable and practical steps to prevent Aaron’s beard 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).