

OPUNTIA FICUS-INDICA



Prickly Pear

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ABOUT

Prickly pears are members of the Cactaceae or cactus family, which includes about 97 genera and 1,600 species. The species are found in Europe, Mediterranean countries, Africa, southwestern United States, and northern Mexico. Plants in the genus *Opuntia* prefer a dry, hot climate and consist of perennial shrubs, trees, and creeping plants. Prickly pear can grow 5 to 8 m in height; its roots are shallow, but the plant can spread up to 40 m in diameter over the ground.



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HISTORY

Prickly pear has a long history of traditional Mexican folk medicine use, particularly as a treatment for diabetes. In South Korea the plant has been used to treat abdominal pain, bronchial asthma, burns, diabetes, and indigestion.

Prickly pear has also been planted on steep slopes to control erosion!



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MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

American Indians used prickly pear juice to treat burns, but it has also been used to treat diabetes. Its use in treating diabetes, lipid disorders, inflammation, and ulcers, as well as its other pharmacologic effects, have been documented. However, there is limited clinical information to support these uses, so the effectiveness is unknown.

