Opuntia stricta is a cactus that can grow up to 2 metres in height and originates in central America. This spiny shrub favours habitats such as rocky slopes, river banks and urban areas. Opuntia stricta was considered to be Australia's worst ever weed. Opuntia stricta is also invasive in South Africa, where biological options are currently being explored to control the problem.
Species Description
Spreading to an erect shrub to 2 metres. Basal stem-segments sometimes thickened, trunk-forming; uppersegmets elliptic to obovate, 10-35cm long, 7-20cm wide, glabrous, dull green to grey-green. Leaves conical, 4.5-6mm long. Spines up to 11 per areole, 1-6cm long, yellow to brown; glochids yellow. Flowers 5-6.5cm diam.; petaloid lobes spreading, yellow. Fruit obovoid with depressed apex, 4-6cm long, 2.5-4cm diam., purple. Seeds 4-5mm long, pale brown.” (George, 1984, In PIER, 2003)

Uses
Cultivated for Medicinal/culinary uses in some areas

Reproduction
Seed. The segments will take root from the "eyes" if left in contact with the ground, and because they are so succulent, they remain capable of rooting for several months after being detached from the parent plant. They can be moved in floods leading to infestations along river banks.

Pathway
This plant came to Australia on the first fleet, making it the oldest weed. Early settlers in Australia planted O. stricta for ornamental purposes and as hedges to keep cattle under control before barbed wire became affordable. (Australian Plants online, 1999)

Principal source:

Compiler: IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)

Review: Under revision

Publlication date: 2010-06-12

ALIEN RANGE
[3] AUSTRALIA
[1] ERIITREA
[1] ETHIOPIA
[1] PORTUGAL
[1] SOMALIA
[1] SPAIN
[1] SOMALIA
[1] SWAZILAND

Red List assessed species 1: EX = 1;
Psephotus pulcherrimus EX
BIBLIOGRAPHY
24 references found for Opuntia stricta

Management information
Summary: An article on different weeds in Australia and a little caption on each one. This article was presented to the Society for Growing Australian Plants Queensland Region Conference, Townsville, 28 June-5 July, 1998.

Summary: Some information on the Common prickly pear in Australia.

Summary: The EPPO Reporting Service is a monthly information report on events of phytosanitary concern. It focuses on new geographical records, new host plants, new pests (including invasive alien plants), pests to be added to the EPPO Alert List, detection and identification methods etc. The EPPO Reporting Service is published in English and French.

Summary: Publication on the Biological control of O. stricta in South Africa.

Summary: Long-term population studies and the development of an integrated management programme for control of Opuntia stricta in Kruger National Park, South Africa.

Summary: This compilation of information sources can be sorted on keywords for example: Baits & Lures, Non Target Species, Eradication, Monitoring, Risk Assessment, Weeds, Herbicides etc. This compilation is at present in Excel format, this will be web-enabled as a searchable database shortly. This version of the database has been developed by the IUCN SSC ISSG as part of an Overseas Territories Environmental Programme funded project XOT603 in partnership with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment. The compilation is a work under progress, the ISSG will manage, maintain and enhance the database with current and newly published information, reports, journal articles etc. Available from: http://www.hear.org/pier/species/opuntia_stricta.htm [Accessed 15 July 2003].

Summary: An integrated management plan for the control of Opuntia stricta in South Africa.

Summary: Ecology, synonyms, common names, distributions (Pacific as well as global), management and impact information.

PIER (Pacific Island Ecosystems at Risk), 2003. Opuntia stricta.
Summary: A database of Pacific Island Ecosystems at Risk.


Swaziland's Alien Plants Database, Undated. Opuntia stricta
Summary: A database of Swaziland's alien plant species.

Summary: Host-plant affinities of two biotypes of Dactylopius opuntiae (Homoptera: Dactylopiidae): enhanced prospects for biological control of Opuntia stricta (Cactaceae) in South Africa.

Wilson, Colin, Wildlife Management Officer, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, Parks & Wildlife Service, Northern Territory, Australia.
Summary: Compilation of original GISD profile of Chromoleana odorata.
General information

Fuentes, A. R., undated. Lista de los cactus nativos y naturalizados de Cuba


Summary: Notes on Invasions.


Summary: A pocket field guide to the identification of 161 of the most important and potentially important alien species in South Africa.

ITIS (Integrated Taxonomic Information System). 2005. Online Database Opuntia stricta

Summary: An online database that provides taxonomic information, common names, synonyms and geographical jurisdiction of a species. In addition links are provided to retrieve biological records and collection information from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Data Portal and bioscience articles from BioOne journals.

Available from:


Summary: Notes on Invasions.


Summary: Notes on spread.


Summary: Synonyms.