# GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE

FULL ACCOUNT FOR: ***Opuntia cochenillifera***

***Opuntia cochenillifera*** 简体中文 正體中文

**System:** Terrestrial

| Kingdom | Phylum | Class | Order | Family |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Plantae | Magnoliophyta | Magnoliopsida | Caryophyllales | Cactacea |

**Common name**

palmatória (English, Portuguese), palma-miuda (English, Portuguese), wooly joint prickly pear (English, English), English tungy (English, Saint Helena), palma-doce (English, Portuguese), prickly pear (English, Saint Helena), Opuntia (English, Saint Helena), cochenillier (English, French), cochineal cactus (English, Anguilla, Bermuda), French prickle (English, Anguilla), white tungy (English, Saint Helena), cochineal-plant (English, English), cochineal cactus (English, English), nopal chamacuero (English, Spanish), palma (English, Portuguese), raquette espagnole (English, French), cacto-de-cochonilha (English, Portuguese), palma-de-engorda (English, Portuguese), nopal de cochinilla (English, Spanish), cochineal nopal cactus (English, Spanish), nopal nochetzli (English, Aztec), cochenillekaktus (English, Norwegian), nopal de la cochinilla (English, Spanish), warm hand (English, English), velvet opuntia (English, English), cochineal nopal cactus (English, English), prickly pear (English, English), nopalea grande (English, English), nopal cactus (English, English), nopales opuntia (English, English), white tungi (English, Saint Helena)

**Synonym**

*Cactus cochenillifer* , L. (basionym)
*Nopalea cochenillifera* , (L.) Salm-Dyck

**Similar species**

*Opuntia monacantha*

**Summary**

An *Opuntia* sp. is reported to be growing in important habitats for endemic vascular flora of Ascension Island.

view this species on IUCN Red List

**Species Description**

*Opuntia cochenillifera* are shrubs or small trees, 2 to 4 m tall. Trunk (when present) terete. Large joints green, elliptic to narrowly obovate , 8 to 40 × 5 to 7.5 cm, thick, margin entire , base and apex rounded. Areoles *circa* 2 mm in diameter. Spines usually absent, when present: 1 to 3 per areole, spreading, grayish tan, acicular, 3 to 9 mm; glochids early deciduous. Leaves conic, 3 to 4 mm, early deciduous. Flowers 1.2 to 1.5 cm in diam., erect . Sepaloids with brilliant red or green midrib , largest ones ovate-deltoid, 5 to 12 × 6 to 9 mm, margin entire, apex acute. Petaloids bright red, ovate to obovate, 1.3 to 1.5 × 0.6 to 1 cm, margin entire or undulate, apex rounded or acute. Filaments pink, 3 to 4 cm; anthers pink, *circa* 1.5 mm. Style pink, 4 to 4.5 cm; stigmas 6 to 8, greenish, *circa* 3 mm. Fruit red, ellipsoid , 3 to 5 × 2.5 to 3 cm, umbilicus developed but not conspicuous. seeds gray or tannish, thickened discoid , *circa* 3 mm in diameter (Flora Of China Vol. 13 Page 210, 211, in BayScience Foundation 2009).

**Uses**
*Opuntia cochenillifera* is widely cultivated, it produces fruits which are gathered for human consumption (Grant 1883).
*Opuntia* has been introduced to enrich soil and prevent the evaporation of moisture (Duffey 1964).
Sheep and goats browse on the young sprouts. Leaves are good fodder for pigs (Grant 1883).
Before synthetic dyes were produced *O. cochenillifera* plants were cultivated for the purpose of supporting populations of *Dactylopius coccus*. When crushed the bodies of this Mexican scale insect produce a carmine-coloured dye.

**Habitat Description**
*Opuntia cochenillifera* are found growing on mountain slopes and low altitudes (BayScience Foundation 2009; Duffey 1964).

**Reproduction**
The prickly pear is easily propagated and the tiniest bit of leaf will take root almost anywhere (Grant 1883).
Flowers bloom from March to May and have a magenta colour (BayScience Foundation 2009).

**Management Info**
Biological: Cochineal (*Dactylopius* spp.) and Cactoblasts (*Cactoblastis* spp.) are the two most important biological control agents for prickly pear cacti. The two attack the cactus in a totally different manner. Cochineal species attach to the outside of the plant and sucks the moisture out of the plant. Cactoblasts are black and yellow striped grubs that tunnel into and devour the inside of the plant (North West Weeds 2007). *Cactoblastis* oviposits by gluing sticks of about 50 to 90 eggs on cactus spines; the gregarious larvae bore into the pads or cladodes, devouring them from the inside (Stiling 2002). Because of its oligophagous feeding habits *Cactoblastis* has been successful against a whole range of *Opuntia* species including 11 species of North American origin (Julien and Griffiths 1998, in Stiling 2002).

**Principal source:**

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**Review:**

**Pubblication date:** 2009-04-02

**ALIEN RANGE**

**[1]** ANGUILLA
**[1]** BERMUDA
**[1]** CHINA
**[1]** COSTA RICA
**[1]** PUERTO RICO
**[3]** SAINT HELENA
**[2]** UNITED STATES
**[1]** VIRGIN ISLANDS, U.S.

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