



Prickly Pear Cactus

Opuntia humifusa

Height: 12 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight: ☉

Hardiness Zone: 4a

Other Names: Devil's Tongue, Compressed Prickly Pear

Description:

A spreading cactus with oval, bright green pads topped with vibrant yellow flowers; mostly spineless and less sharp glochids but still must handle the pads carefully; an edible plant

Ornamental Features

Prickly Pear Cactus features showy yellow flowers at the ends of the stems from mid spring to mid summer. Its attractive succulent oval leaves remain green in color throughout the year. The red fruits are carried on spikes in late summer.

Landscape Attributes

Prickly Pear Cactus is an herbaceous evergreen perennial with a ground-hugging habit of growth. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other garden plants with finer foliage.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Prickly Pear Cactus is recommended for the following landscape applications;



Prickly Pear Cactus
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Prickly Pear Cactus flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

- Mass Planting
- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Prickly Pear Cactus will grow to be about 12 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 inches. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 5 years.

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It requires an extremely dry, well-drained growing location, and will usually die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soils. It is quite intolerant of urban pollution, therefore inner city or urban streetside plantings are best avoided. This species is native to parts of North America.

Prickly Pear Cactus is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its spreading habit of growth, it is ideally suited for use as a 'spiller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the edges where it can spill gracefully over the pot. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.