

# PRICKLY PEAR

## Noxious Weed

Prickly-pear is the name given to a group of perennial, succulent plants of American origin which belong to the cactus family (Cactaceae). It is from the fruit, which is very spiny and pear shaped, that the plant has been given the name of prickly pear.

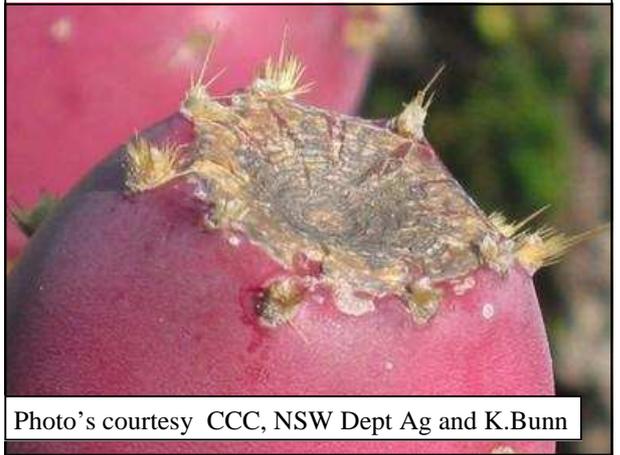
The spines are very sharp and may occur singly or in a group from each areole. In some species the spines are almost absent. Some spines are strong enough to penetrate a leather boot.



The control of prickly-pear by the biological agents *Cactoblastis* and *Cochineal* (pictured left), is still regarded as one of the most effective forms of control in Australia.

Though all varieties of prickly-pear can be destroyed by burning or burying. This is useful when there are only a few plants to be eradicated, such as garden plants or odd plants on a property. Buried plants must be covered with sufficient soil to deprive them of air. Any underground bulbs should be squashed before burying. Plants being burnt should be dug up and put on top of a fire or in an incinerator. Care should be taken to burn all pieces of fruit, pads or segments. Any piece not burnt will become a new plant.

Prickly-pear spreads by seeds and segments, which are readily detached from the parent plant by animals, wind or flood waters, take root where they lodge. Prickly-pear plants produce a heavy crop of fruit each summer, which are very palatable to animals and birds, particularly crows, emus and magpies.



Photo's courtesy CCC, NSW Dept Ag and K.Bunn

The tough coated seeds pass undamaged through the digestive system and quickly germinate where dropped. The seeds can remain viable for very long periods and are capable of germinating for at least twenty (20) years after production.

