

*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. (basonym)  
*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:

**Compiler:** Interim compiled by IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG) with support from the EU-funded South Atlantic Invasive Species project, coordinated by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

## Review:

**Publication date:** 2009-04-02

## ALIEN RANGE

[1] ANGUILLA

[1] CHINA

[1] PUERTO RICO

[2] UNITED STATES

[1] BERMUDA

[1] COSTA RICA

[3] SAINT HELENA

[1] VIRGIN ISLANDS, U.S.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

16 references found for *Opuntia cochenillifera*

### Management information

[Hawaiian Ecosystems at Risk project \(HEAR\). 2008. Plants of Hawaii: Cactaceae > \*Opuntia cochenillifera\*](#)

**Summary:** Images.

Available from: <http://www.hear.org/starr/plants/images/species/?q=opuntia+cochenillifera> [Accessed 10 December 2008]

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# GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE

FULL ACCOUNT FOR: *Opuntia cochenillifera*

[St. Helena National Trust., 2007. newsletter no.17 - dec 2007 - The Millennium Forest ♦ An Evolving and Maturing Long Term Project](#)

**Summary:** Available from: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.sh/newsletters/no17/newletter-17-dec07-3.html> [Accessed 19 January 2009]  
Stiling, P. 2002. Potential non-target effects of a biological control agent, prickly pear moth, *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg) (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae), in North America, and possible management actions. *Biological Invasions* 4: 273-281, 2002.

[Zimmermann, H., H. S. Bloem & H. Klein., 2004. Biology, History, Threat, Surveillance and Control of the Cactus Moth, \*Cactoblastis cactorum\*. Joint FAO/IAEA Programme of Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture](#)

**Summary:** Available from: [http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/faobsc\\_web.pdf](http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/faobsc_web.pdf) [Accessed 25 October 2008]

## General information

[BayScience Foundation. 2009. ZipcodeZoo.com: \*Opuntia cochenillifera\* \(Woolly Joint Prickly Pear\)](#)

**Summary:** Available from: [http://zipcodezoo.com/Plants/O/Opuntia\\_cochenillifera/](http://zipcodezoo.com/Plants/O/Opuntia_cochenillifera/) [Accessed 28 August 2008]

[Chacón, Eduardo and Guido Saborío-R., 2003. Lista De Especies De Plantas Introducidas En Costa Rica. Asociación para la Conservación y el Estudio de la Biodiversidad \(ACEBIO\) \[edchacon@gmail.com & gsaborio@gmail.com\].](#)

[Duffey, Eric. 1964. The terrestrial ecology of Ascension Island, \*The Journal of Applied Ecology\* 1 \(2\)](#)

**Summary:** Available from: [http://www.seaturtle.org/PDF/Duffey\\_1964\\_JAppEcol.pdf](http://www.seaturtle.org/PDF/Duffey_1964_JAppEcol.pdf) [Accessed 25 October 2009]

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**Summary:** Available from: [http://www.hear.org/gcw/species/opuntia\\_cochenillifera/](http://www.hear.org/gcw/species/opuntia_cochenillifera/) [Accessed 20 August 2008]

[Grant, Benjamin., 1883. A few notes on St. Helena and Descriptive Guide. Printed and Published by Benjamin Grant, Printer, Guardian Office, Jamestown.](#)

**Summary:** Available from: <http://www.bweaver.nom.sh/grant/grant.htm> [Accessed 20 August 2008]

[Gray, Alan, Tara Pelembe and Stedson Stroud. 2005. The conservation of the endemic vascular flora of Ascension Island and threats from alien species, \*Oryx\* 39 \(4\)](#)

**Summary:** Available from:

[http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FORX%2FORX39\\_04%2FS0030605305001092a.pdf&code=a496b9c9fa1ba28f5d1724b76fbc7feb](http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FORX%2FORX39_04%2FS0030605305001092a.pdf&code=a496b9c9fa1ba28f5d1724b76fbc7feb) [Accessed 10 December 2008]

[ITIS \(Integrated Taxonomic Information System\), 2008. Online Database \*Opuntia cochenillifera\* \(L.\) P. Mill.](#)

**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: [http://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search\\_topic=TSN&search\\_value=19699](http://www.itis.gov/servlet/SingleRpt/SingleRpt?search_topic=TSN&search_value=19699) [Accessed 25 October 2008]

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[Staples, George W., Derral Herbst & Clyde T. Imada, 2000. Survey of Invasive or Potentially Invasive Cultivated Plants in Hawaii. A Special Publication of the Records of the Hawaii Biological Survey for 1999. Honolulu, Hawaii.](#)

[TROPICOS - Flora of China Checklist - 15 Jan 2009 \*Opuntia cochenillifera\* \(L.\) Mill.](#)

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