



Know What You Grow!



Prickly Pear

Scientific Name: *Opuntia ficus-indica*

Recommended Varieties:

- Burbank spineless
- Melrose spineless
- Hemet spineless

Common Pest(s):

Mostly pest free, they can suffer from root rot because of over watering. Scale and mealy bugs are known pests.

[UC Integrated Pest Management: Cacti](#)

[The Spruce](#)

Photos: Creative Commons

Growing Information

Warm Season Plant

Opuntias may be started from seed, but growth is slow, and three to four years may pass before flowers and fruits appear. Most of the cultivated opuntia are spineless. When planting the pad, settle it upright only about an inch deep in a mixture of equal parts of soil and sand or rough pumice. Planting the pad too deeply will encourage rot.

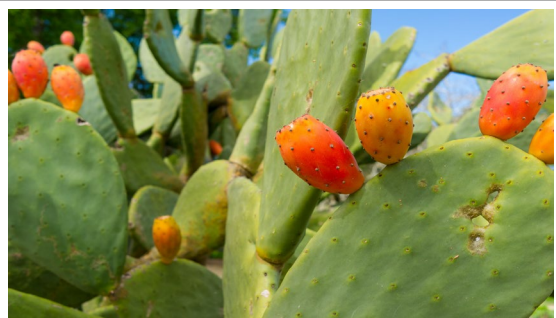
Ideal Planting Window

Early spring to avoid sun burn

Growing Guidance

If you grow the prickly pear for its pads, feed with a high-nitrogen fertilizer. In warm climates, well-tended plants may be harvested of pads up to six times a year, and established plants may yield 20 to 40 one-half pound pads at each harvest. The best time of day to harvest the pads is from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, when the acid content in the pads is at its lowest.

[UC Davis](#)



Interesting Facts

You may be more familiar with the term cacti than nopales, but this succulent plant is flourishing as a tasty, inventive ingredient in kitchens from coast-to-coast. Nopales are versatile, healthy and can be easily paired with many different dishes.

In fact, through a highly competitive veggie-licious throw-down, nopales were named the Food Literacy Center's 2016-2017 Veggie of the Year. Based in Sacramento, Calif., the Food Literacy Center is a non-profit organization with a mission to inspire kids to eat their vegetables.

All species of cacti are native to the Americas, except for mistletoe cactus, which is native to Africa. Nopales specifically have 114 species common to Mexico. More than 7 million acres in the country are dedicated to growing the plant!

Nopal, commonly referred to as "prickly pear cactus" in English, is a staple in Mexican dishes. Nopales have citrus and tart flavor characteristics, making them easy to use in a side dish or to include in a main course. Nopales can also be consumed raw. Popular Mexican nopal dishes include huevos con nopales, and tacos de nopales.

Prickly Pear is one of the most drought-tolerant vegetables needing water just once a month!

[Food Literacy Center](#)

Contact Information



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Nutritional Information

Nutritional Value

One cup of raw nopales contains approximately: 13.8 calories, 1.14 grams (g) of protein, 0.08 g of fat, 2.86 g of carbohydrate, 1.89 g of fiber, 0.99 g of sugar, 19.8 micrograms (mcg) of vitamin A, 8 milligrams (mg) of vitamin C, 141 mg of calcium.

[Medical News Today](#)

Easy Nopales and Eggs



Ingredients:

- 2/3 Cups nopales chopped and cooked
- 2 Eggs
- 2 Teaspoons green onion chopped
- 1 Teaspoon vegetable oil
- Salt to taste

Prepare:

1. Add the oil to a frying pan over medium heat. Once it is hot, add the chopped green onions and stir-fry for a minute.
2. Stir in the nopales, and cook for 1-2 minutes. Add the eggs and cook until tender, stirring as needed. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with beans and warm corn tortillas. Garnish with cilantro.

Photo: Creative Commons

[Mexico in my Kitchen](#)