



Invasive cacti

a prickly problem

Invasive cacti are a serious threat to biodiversity and agricultural systems within Australian rangeland regions. The key features listed may assist you to identify these prickly invaders.

Austrocyllindropuntia & *Cylindropuntia*

Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica Cane cactus



- Erect, branching shrub 0.3-1.5m tall. Often forms patches several metres wide.
- Dark bluish-green, shiny. Rounded, 15-50cm long, 3-4cm diameter. Deciduous leaves to 1cm long.
 - Red, cup shaped.
 - Egg to urn shaped, to 4.5cm long. Deep green-yellow green. (Can produce chains).
 - 2-6 spines, approx 1cm long. (Lack papery sheath).

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata Eve's-pin cactus



- Branching shrub to 3m tall. Forms patches to 8m wide. Leaves can persist.
- Mid green. Slender, to 50cm long, 4-5cm diameter. Leaves to 12cm long.
 - Pink.
 - Oblong, egg or club shaped to 10cm long. Green. (Can produce chains).
 - 1-4 spines, up to 7cm long. (Lack papery sheath).

Cylindropuntia fulgida var. *mamillata* Coral cactus, boxing glove cactus



- Erect shrub up to 0.4-0.8m tall. Deciduous leaves. Rarely flowers/fruits.
- Green-grey green. Often distorted, with a corrugated (tuberculate) surface, 10-22cm long, 2-4.5cm diameter. Often numerous, easily detached small segments.
 - Deep red.
 - Inverse cone or oval shaped. Grey-green. Forms long chains. Usually sterile.
 - 4-15 spines, 7-20cm long (often shorter). Cream to brown (colour variable). (White to tan sheath).

Cylindropuntia imbricata Devil's rope/rope pear



- Branched shrub or small tree 1-3m tall. Often with short trunks. Deciduous leaves.
- Dull grey-green. 15-40cm long, 3.5-5cm diameter. Large, widely spaced tubercles give a woven, rope like appearance.
 - Dark pink, magenta.
 - Flashy, egg shaped, to 4cm long. Greenish-yellow when ripe. (Can form chains).
 - 2-12 spines, 0.8-3cm long. Trunks often covered in spines. Off white-cream. (Off white-cream sheath attached).

Cylindropuntia kleiniae



- Straggly shrub to 0.5-2.5m tall. Large plants form trunk. Deciduous leaves.
- Light grey-green. 6-26cm long, 0.6-1.2cm diameter.
 - Pink-red.
 - Egg or cylinder shaped. Ripens to orange.
 - 1-4 spines, 2-4.5cm long. White to brown. (Tan sheath firmly attached).

Cylindropuntia leptocaulis Pencil cactus



- Spreading shrub 0.4-1.8m tall. Deciduous leaves.
- Green-grey green. Very slender, 2-8cm long, 0.3-0.5cm diameter.
 - Pale to greenish yellow.
 - Fleshy, egg shaped. Yellow to red when ripe. Spineless. Often sterile.
 - 0-4 spines, 0.5-1.5cm long. Cream to pale yellow.

Cylindropuntia prolifera Jumping cholla



- Low shrub 0.4-1m tall. Deciduous leaves.
- Greenish grey. 4-15cm long, 4-5cm diameter. Easily detached. Prominent tubercles.
 - Rose to magenta.
 - Top shaped, 2-5cm long. Green. Can form chains. Usually sterile.
 - 7-11 spines, 1-2cm long. Light to dark brown, interlacing. (White to tan sheath firmly attached).

Cylindropuntia spinosior Snake cactus



- Erect shrub to 1m tall. Often forming patches several metres wide. Similar to *C. prolifera*, but different spine and fruit colour. Deciduous leaves.
- Mid grey-green. 10-24cm long, 1.5-3cm diameter. Firmly attached. Prominent tubercles.
 - Rose-purple.
 - Fleshy, cylindrical, to 4cm long. Yellow, sometimes green.
 - 6-24 spines, 0.8-1.5cm long, interlacing. White to grey. (White sheath firmly attached).

Cylindropuntia rosea (White-spined) Hudson pear



- Low, spreading shrub, 0.5-1m tall. Up to 3m wide. Old plants can develop trunks, but not commonly seen. Deciduous leaves.
- Grey-pale green. 4.5-26cm long, 1.5-3.5cm diameter. Easily detached. Prominent tubercles.
 - Pink-red.
 - Oblong to egg shaped, to 3cm long. Green-yellow green. Sterile hybrid.
 - 7-14 spines, 1-4cm long. White to light brown. (White sheath loosely attached).

Cylindropuntia tunicata (Brown-spined) Hudson pear



- Low, densely branched shrub 0.3 to 0.6m tall. Deciduous leaves.
- Pale grey-green. 10-20cm long, 1.5-3cm diameter. Easily detached. Prominent tubercles.
 - Yellowish-brown.
 - Club to top shaped. Greenish-yellowish to red. Spineless. Usually sterile.
 - 4-7 spines, 3-7cm long. Red-brown to pale brown. (Brownish sheath loosely attached).

Key to symbols

- Stem segments
- Flowers
- Fruits
- Spines

Glossary

- Areole – small pits or depressions on the surface of segments.
- Glochids – small, detachable barbed bristles.
- Tubercle – a small raised area or nodule on a plant surface.
- Stem segment – distinct, individual part of the stem. Can be cylindrical (e.g. in *Austrocyllindropuntia* & *Cylindropuntia*), or flattened (e.g. in *Opuntia*, commonly referred to as pads).
- Sheath – papery outer covering of the spine. Only present in *Cylindropuntia* species.

This poster is based on a previous version by the South Australian Opuntia Taskforce.



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