

***Opuntia humifusa* – Prickly Pear Cactus**

COMMON NAME: Prickly Pear Cactus, Devil's Tongue

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Opuntia humifusa* - The name *opuntia* comes from a Greek plant growing near Opus, Greece, but this is a very different plant! It is a genus of cactus that has pads. *Humifusa* means "spreading" or "prostrate".

FLOWER: Satiny yellow, often with orange or red towards the center. The blossoms are 1½ to 3 inches across. Insects are greatly attracted to the flowers with their pollen-covered stamens.

BLOOMING PERIOD: June to July. Each individual flower lasts only a day, but there are usually many flower buds which give the plant about a month of blossoming.

SIZE: This is a low-spreading plant no more than 10 inches or so high

BEHAVIOR: This cactus forms clumps. The spiny pads shrivel in cold temperatures, but this is natural.

SITE REQUIREMENTS: Prefers full sun, but will tolerate partial shade. It likes fairly dry, well-drained poor rocky or sandy soil.

NATURAL RANGE: Eastern half of the U.S. west to Minnesota and Texas. In Wisconsin it is found chiefly in the southern part.

SPECIAL FEATURES: Suitable for rock gardens or dry-prairie gardens. The broken upper part of the pad often roots if planted, making it an easy plant to propagate. The fruits that form after the flowers are pear-shaped and become a deep red color. Both the fruits and pads are edible.

SUGGESTED CARE: Plant in a well-drained sunny area. It is one of the easiest cactus species to grow.

COMPANION PLANTS: Spiderwort, pasque flower, leadplant, bird's foot violet, columbine, thimbleweed, old-field goldenrod.