

Tiger pear (*Opuntia aurantiaca*)

Tiger pear is a low spreading cactus. Its sharp spines can injure people and animals.



HOW DOES THIS WEED AFFECT YOU?

Tiger pear has sharp, barbed spines up to 5 cm long that:

- cause painful injuries to people, livestock, working dogs and pets
- injure and sometimes kill wildlife that get trapped in the spines
- devalue wool and hides and prevent shearing
- get stuck around the mouth of lambs or calves and prevent them from feeding.

Tiger pear forms dense thickets that prevent movement of animals and people. This means that:

- livestock may not be able to access feed
- mustering is difficult
- access to watering points is reduced
- recreational activities such as bushwalking and camping are restricted.

WHERE IS IT FOUND?

Tiger pear is very widespread across NSW, especially in North West, Central West and Hunter regions.

It is native to South America and was likely introduced in the late 1800s.



DESCRIPTION

Tiger pear is a spreading or climbing cactus that rarely grows taller than 40 cm without support. It can grow up to 2 m high by climbing on other plants.

Stems (pads or cladodes) are:

- dark green, sometimes red to purplish
- very branched
- like a flattened cylinder, sometimes round
- 3.5–20 cm long and 1-5 cm thick
- covered in small raised bumps (areoles) that have hair-like bristles and 1–7 longer spines in each.

Spines are:

- grey or brown
- 1–5 cm long
- very sharp and rigid
- barbed near the tips that makes them difficult to remove.

Flowers are:

- yellow
- 2–5 cm in diameter
- cup-shaped.

Fruit are:

- egg or pear-shaped with a flattened top
- 2.0–3.5 cm long
- green when young
- red to purple when ripe
- spiny.

Leaves are:

- very small (3–4 mm long)
- cone-shaped
- fall off when the stems are young.

CONTROL

Successful weed control relies on follow up after the initial efforts. This means looking for and killing regrowth or new plants. Using a combination of control methods is usually more successful.

Prevention

Avoid driving or walking through areas with tiger pear. If you have been in an area with tiger pear, check tyres, under vehicles, caravans, footwear and machinery before leaving the infested area. Remove all plant parts using pliers or tongs. Dispose of them appropriately.

Disposal

Dispose of tiger pear by burying it at least one metre deep or by burning in a hot fire. Contact your local council for information about other disposal options.

Physical control

Dig up small or isolated plants using a mattock or other tools. Wear appropriate protective clothing and gloves to protect against injuries.

Larger infestations may be controlled by machinery. Ensure the roots are dug out and that all plant parts are disposed of.

Chemical control

Herbicides are especially useful for sparse, scattered infestations. Spray actively growing plants. Cover all parts of the plant with herbicide. Check treated plants and control new growth.



Source: <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/TigerPear>

LOOK A LIKES

- Rope pear (*Cylindropuntia imbricata*). Rope pear has dark pink flowers and grows much taller (up to 3 m high).

How does it spread?

By seed

Tiger pear does not spread by seed. It does produce seeds but they are sterile.

By plant parts

The stem segments of tiger pear detach easily from the main plant. New plants can grow from the fruit or small segments of the plant when they make contact with the soil. The plant parts are spread by:

- attaching to wool or fur on animals
- sticking to footwear or clothing
- attaching to tyres or machinery
- flowing water
- dumping plant material from gardens.

what type of environment does it grow in

Tiger pear grows in warm-temperate and dry subtropical climates with annual rainfall from 150 mm to over 800 mm. It grows in a wide variety of soil types and is very drought tolerant once established.

Tiger pear invades pastures, open woodlands, open shrublands, pastures, fence-lines, roadsides, stream-banks and is common along creeks and waterways.

For more info please visit:

<https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/Tigerpear>

DECLARATION & BIOSECURITY DUTY

Regional Priority weed category - CONTAINMENT:
This weed is widely distributed in the region. while broad scale elimination is not practical, minimization of the biosecurity risk posed by this weed is reasonable practicable.