Opuntia microdasys and Opuntia rufida

Scientific Name

*Opuntia microdasys* (Lehm.) Pfeiff.

Synonyms

*Opuntia rufida* Engelm. is sometimes considered to be a synonym.

Family

Cactaceae

Common Names

bunny ear cactus, angel's wings, golden bristle cactus

Origin

Northern and central America (south-central USA and Mexico)

Habitat

Open habitats in arid and semi-arid rangeland, also in cultivated situations.

Habit

Bunny ears forms dense shrubs 40-60 cm tall, occasionally more.

Distinguishing Features

- dense shrub to 60 cm
- yellow or white bristles
- no spines
- pads grow in pairs like rabbit ears
- flowers yellow
- Red-purple fruits

Stems and Leaves

The shrubs have no central stem but are composed of pad-like stems that grow out in pairs giving the appearance of bunny ears. The pads are green to pale green and velvety, round to oblong, 6-15 cm long and 4-12 cm broad. The pads have dense clusters of yellow or white glochids (hair-like prickles) 2-3 mm long but no spines.

Flowers and Fruit

Flowers are yellow and 3 cm wide. Fruits are fleshy, globular, 3 cm long and red-purple.

Environmental Impact

It has the potential to form extensive dense stands much like prickly pear cactus and could reduce agricultural productivity over large areas of arid and semi-arid grazing land

Legislation

A class 1 declared pest in Queensland.

Management

Landholders should report the presence of this plant to State government authorities.

Similar Species
Opuntia rufida

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