

ERECT PRICKLYPEAR

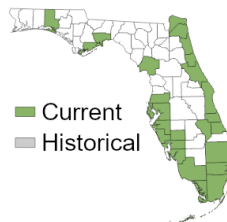
Opuntia stricta (Haw.) Haw.

Synonyms: none

Family: Cactaceae (cactus)

FNAI Ranks: G4?/S3S4

Legal Status: US-none FL-Threatened



Camille Eckel

Field Description: This is a generally erect gray-green cactus to about 6 feet tall with fleshy pads, up to 12 inches long, branching from thick joints. The pads bear clusters of up to 4 spines which are golden at maturity and ½ to 2½ inches long. The bright yellow flowers are about 3 inches wide with many short stamens. The deep red to purple, pear-shaped, edible fruit, 2 to 3 inches long, contains many seeds.

Similar Species: Plants may be recognized by their generally upright habit and yellow spines, in contrast to the gray spines of *O. humifusa*, a scrub and sandhill species of pricklypear.

Related Rare Species: Semaphore cactus (*Opuntia corallicola*), state-endangered, has orange to red flowers, flattened branches that are oblong and curved, and held at right angles to the ground.

Habitat: Pine rocklands, shell middens, dunes, and coastal hammocks.

Best Survey Season: All year.

erect pricklypear

Opuntia stricta

Range-wide Distribution: Coastal areas of the Southeastern US, the West Indies, Mexico, and northern South America.

Conservation Status: State-threatened, this species is vouchered from 27 counties, scattered in coastal areas throughout the State of Florida.

Protection and Management: All *Opuntia* species are susceptible to predation by larvae of the invasive exotic *Cactoblastis cactorum* moth.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011