

COASTAL PRICKLYPEAR

Opuntia stricta var. *stricta* (Haw.) Haw.

Synonyms: none

Family: Cactaceae (cactus)

FNAI Ranks: G4?TNR/SNR

Legal Status: US-none; FL-Threatened



No Image
Available

Field Description: **Plants** forming erect or ascending shrubs or small trees; **tepals** yellow or greenish yellow; stamens thigmonastic; **glochid pattern** generally of an adaxial crescent in the areole, i.e, **glochids** forming a dense fascicle in the upper portion of the areole, not widely separated throughout, exerted or not from the areole; **cladodes** usually few-spined, **spines** mostly 0 - 3 per areole, generally straight, produced erect from the areole or only slightly spreading, usually rounded, slightly twisted, or only slightly flattened at base, yellow (Weakley et al. 2023).

Similar Species: None

Related Rare Species: Semaphore pricklypear (*Consolea corallicola*) differs by having stems flattened in x-section, at least apically with the main axis of plant unsegmented, bearing 'pads' at its summit; fruits and flowers bearing spines (Weakley et al. 2023).

Habitat: Coastal dunes and coastal scrub, shell middens in salt marshes of the Gulf Coast, occasionally in water-logged saline soils of mangroves (Weakley et al. 2023).

Best Survey Season: Flowering and fruiting April - December (February).

Range-wide Distribution: Se. NC (reports from VA are based on a misidentification) south to s. FL, west to e. LA.

Conservation Status: It is unknown the full extent of this species in Florida. There are many observations of coastal pricklypear (*Opuntia stricta* sensu lato) on iNaturalist within Florida (~1000) but without appropriate and quality photographs they are difficult to verify. Both varieties have a wide range of variability in their morphology, making it even more difficult to separate into variety. It is likely that the species occurs in a variety of managed areas, but further assessment is needed.

Protection and Management: It is unknown the full extent of this species in Florida. There are many observations of coastal pricklypear (*Opuntia stricta* sensu lato) on iNaturalist within Florida (~1000) but without appropriate and quality photographs they are difficult to verify. Both varieties have a wide range of variability in their morphology, making it even more difficult to separate into variety. It is likely that the species occurs in a variety of managed areas, but further assessment is needed.

References: Weakley, A. S. and the Southeastern Flora Team 2023