Opuntia humifusa

Eastern Prickly Pear

Ohio's only native cactus species! Eastern Prickly Pear's distinctive spines, pads, and large yellow flowers make it a unique and lovely addition to the home garden. It is ideal for creating a low-growing patch on sandy or rocky soils where few other plants thrive.

Characteristics

- Height: 8 inches
- Spread: 2-4 feet
- Bloom time: June-July
- Bloom color: Yellow

Attributes

- Its flat, fleshy pads are defended by both long spines and glochids (small patches of barbed prickles); deer and rabbits avoid eating it
- Flowers are striking, but short-lived
- Flowers are attractive to native bees, butterflies, and beetles
- Both its red fruits and young pads (known as nopales in Mexican cuisine) are edible

Growing and Maintenance

- Soil requirements: Well-drained
- Light requirements: Full Sun, Part Sun
- Water requirements: Low
- Pads spread to form a low-growing patch
- Does not tolerate water-logged soil
- Can survive winter temperatures < 0°F; pads may be shriveled with brown spots in the winter, but recover quickly each spring
- Weeds occasionally take root between pads; a dandelion weeder can be used to extract them without contacting any spines
- Propagate via cuttings of individual pads; wear protective gloves to handle pads

Native Range

- Found in most states in the eastern United States, but is restricted to sandy soils
- Native to parts of southern and northwestern Ohio
- Grows on sand dunes in the Oak Openings Region, can be seen in Oak Openings Metropark and Kitty Todd Nature Preserve

Developed by Black Swamp Conservancy

References listed at www.blackswamp.org/factsheetreferences/