NSW GOVERNMENT

Prickly pears (*Cylindropuntia* spp.)

Weed management guide

Weed type
Cactus

February 2023

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west

In NSW, weeds are regulated by the NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015. All land managers have a General Biosecurity Duty to contain the spread of weeds.

"General Biosecurity Duty means that any person dealing with plant matter must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable)."

The Regional priority for Prickly pears is Eradication. In order to achieve this, Land Managers are asked to: *Mitigate the risk of new weeds being introduced to their land. The plant should be eradicated from the land and the land kept free of the plant. The plant should not be bought, sold, grown, carried or released into the environment.*

For further information, contact your local Biosecurity (Weeds) Officer via Central West Local Land Services or visit NSW WeedWise.

NSW WeedWise

Habit and description

Prickly pears are a generic name for different groups of cacti. In this case, it refers to other species of *Cylindropuntia* that are not Hudson pears (*C. pallida* and *C. tunicata*). Boxing glove cactus (*C. fulgida* var. *mamillata*) and Rope pear (*C. imbricata*), among other cacti in this genus are found in the state.

As implied by its name, Boxing glove cactus has a unique shape resulting from the twisting and bending of its stems (10-22 cm long and 2-4.5 cm wide). These are covered with cream to brown spines (0.7-2 cm long). It has deep red flowers and a green to grey-green fruit that is in a shape of an egg.

Stems of the Rope pear (15-40 cm long and 3-5 cm wide) have rope-like shapes growing in multiple directions. These are covered with shorter spines (8-30 mm long) that are white to cream in colour. Its flowers are dark pink to purply red growing at the end of stems.

Both plants have fibrous and shallow roots. These grow in a wide variety of habitats but mainly in arid and semi-arid areas.

Photo: Boxing glove cactus
© Bob Chinnock | NSW DPI

Photo: Rope pear
© John Hosking | NSW DPI

Photo: Snake cactus
© John Hosking | NSW DPI

Photo: Pencil cactus
© John Hosking | NSW DPI

Reproduction and spread

Rope pears have viable seeds that are spread by birds and other animals. Boxing glove cactus on the other hand does not.

Both species are also capable of reproducing from detached plant parts. Once these fragments make contact with the soil, it sends out roots and creates a clone of the parent plant.

Impacts

Agriculture

- The spines from these plants can cause injury to livestock, people, working animals, and pets.
- It can contaminate wool from sheep and prevent shearing.
- Dense infestation serves as physical barriers making it harder for livestock to move to grazing areas or watering holes.

Native vegetation

- Prickly pear is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) in Australia (NSW Department of Primary Industries, 2017)
- These cacti can exclude and outcompete plants in their native habitat.
- These can also serve as hiding places for pests like rabbits and foxes.

Management

Chemical

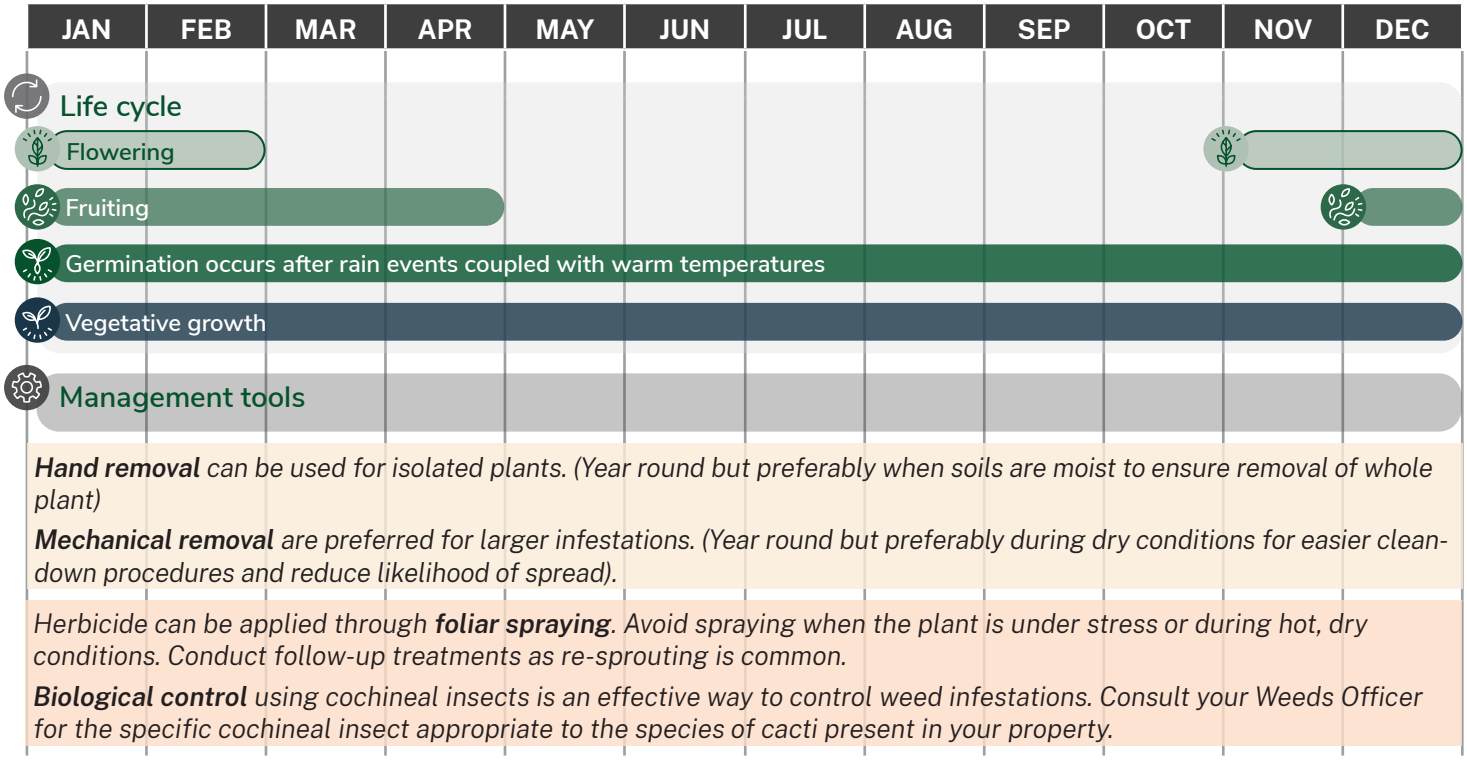
- Spraying is the preferred way of applying herbicide. As the plant may regrow, follow-up treatments maybe required.
- Spray when the plants are actively growing. Avoid spraying when the plant is under stress or during hot, dry conditions.
- Seek the guidance of an experienced Weeds Officer for expert advice on herbicide use.
- Visit www.apvma.gov.au for a list of registered products, product labels and permit requirements.
- NSW DPI (2018) provides a list of recommended herbicides for the control of Prickly pears at https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/PricklyPearsCylindropuntias

Non-chemical

- Access to infested areas must be restricted to prevent stock from spreading the plant.
- Small plants can be removed by hand, taking into consideration to remove all parts to prevent regrowth. Adequate personal protective equipment must be used to avoid injury or irritation.
- Dense infestations can be controlled by using cochineal insects. This is not effective against spread out individuals as the insects are not very mobile. Certain insects target particular species so advice should be sought from your local weeds officer.

Weed type
Cacti

Management calendar



Hand removal *can be used for isolated plants. (Year round but preferably when soils are moist to ensure removal of whole plant)*

Mechanical removal *are preferred for larger infestations. (Year round but preferably during dry conditions for easier clean-down procedures and reduce likelihood of spread).*

Herbicide can be applied through ***foliar spraying****. Avoid spraying when the plant is under stress or during hot, dry conditions. Conduct follow-up treatments as re-sprouting is common.*

Biological control *using cochineal insects is an effective way to control weed infestations. Consult your Weeds Officer for the specific cochineal insect appropriate to the species of cacti present in your property.*

Optimal control options may vary depending on your location and climate. Consult an experienced Weeds Officer based in your local government area for control methods suited to your conditions.

All herbicides must be used in accordance with the herbicide label and permit requirements.

Further information

NSW WeedWise

For more information on your general biosecurity duties, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity.

For the best guidance on how to meet this duty on your property, contact your expert Weeds Officer at your local council or via Local Land Services www.lls.nsw.gov.au/regions/central-west.

References

NSW Department of Primary Industries. (2017). Weeds of National Significance. Retrieved from NSW WeedWise: https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/WeedListPublics/CategoryResults?showImages=True&categoryId=1&pageTitle=Weeds%20of%20National%20Significance

NSW DPI. (2018). *NSW WeedWise.* https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/Weeds/PricklyPearsCylindropuntias

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