

# FGCU Food Forest

## Plant Database

### Nopales (*Opuntia ficus-indica*)

**Origin:** Mexico, Central America.

**Description:** Nopales is a domesticated cactus species that features spineless edible

**Uses:** Food and traditional medicine; living fences; animal fodder.

**Harvest:** Year-round. Fruits can be harvested from August to October in Florida.

**Flower:** May through July in Florida. Flowers

**Tolerance:** Extreme drought and cold tolerance. Requires well-draining soil but will tolerate a wide range of soils.



**General Description:** Nopales, also known as *Nopal* or *Spineless Prickly Pear*, is a domesticated cactus species that features edible pads, beautiful flowers, and delicious fruit. Nopales usually reaches somewhere between 12-16 ft. when cultivated, although they typically stay smaller in the wild.

- **Native Origin:** Mexico, Central America.
- **General History:** Nopales is native to Central America, and along with numerous other *Opuntia* species, is widely distributed worldwide. *Opuntia ficus-indica* is the most widely cultivated *Opuntia* species, and spread throughout the Americas during pre-Columbian times. The Aztecs used Nopal for food, medicine, and also as dyes, which they used in rituals. In post-Columbian times, Spineless Prickly Pear was spread throughout the world, mostly due to the heavy use of Nopal by sailors to prevent scurvy. Nopales quickly naturalized throughout the Mediterranean due to the fact that many shipping routes began or ended at their port cities.
- **Distribution:** Tropics and subtropics worldwide; naturalized in Florida, USA.

- **Season of Harvest:** Year-round for pads. Fruit can be harvested from August to October in Florida, USA.
- **Culinary Uses:** Like almost all *Opuntia* species, the pads of *Opuntia ficus-indica* are edible. Nopal pads are an important part of Mexican cuisine, and can be used in many different ways. The Nopal pads can be eaten raw or cooked, and the fruit, known as “Prickly Pear”, can be eaten raw or made into juice, jelly, and jam. Mexicans have made alcoholic drinks called *colonche* from the fruit for centuries. Italians produce a liquor from the fruit called *Ficodi*.

Nopales	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Core Eudicots
Order:	Caryophyllales
Family:	Cactaceae
Subfamily:	Opuntioideae
Tribe:	Opuntieae
Genus:	<i>Opuntia</i>
Species:	<b><i>O. ficus-indica</i></b>

#### **Sources**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opuntia\\_ficus-indica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opuntia_ficus-indica)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opuntia>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nopal>

[http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=OPEL3](http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=OPEL3)

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