

## Practical best practice management of opuntoid cacti – from desk to dirt

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**Summary** Opuntoid cacti, comprising of 27 species from three genera in Australia, are often described as cryptic plants. Their distribution ranges from widespread to isolated. Growth form varies from low growing shrubs to 8-metre-tall trees. For some species seed germination and longevity remain knowledge gaps. Some species are kept in check by one of Australia's most successful biological control agents (*Cactoblastis cactorum*), whilst others require specific, labour intensive chemical or physical control. Field identification is challenging, and common and scientific names are often misapplied. What is certain is that, largely, opuntoid cacti remain difficult to control and can out persist the resources and will of land managers.

Approximately five years after their listing as Weeds of National Significance, a best practice control manual for opuntoid cacti has been developed. The manual goes a long way in demystifying this group of 27 species by providing a comprehensive synthesis

of known information on the weeds' biology, ecology, distribution and impacts. Details on planning and case studies from across Australia provide useful ideas to consider before control work begins.

Additionally, the manual offers practical, easy to follow field advice through identification guides; descriptions of control methods; registered herbicides; and tips for safe working conditions. A decision support tool helps weed managers chose and implement best practice control options based on:

- cacti growth form;
- weed density;
- site sensitivity; and
- site accessibility.

Combined, the use of these tools and other resources, provides the best chance of successfully managing opuntoid cacti in Australia.

**Keywords** Opuntoid cacti, Weeds of National Significance, best practice management, decision support tools.