



## Bulletin March 2025

### High-risk pathways for high-risk ornamentals

A routine search for [high-risk cacti](#) (Opuntoid cacti) has uncovered a species previously not reported in Australia. Biosecurity Officer Sina Leis (fig. 1) thought she had found a violet prickly pear (*Opuntia gosseliniana*), a prohibited species, being sold in the Mackay region through Facebook Marketplace. However, the specimen was identified by the Queensland Herbarium as *Opuntia macrocentra* (long-spined prickly pear; fig. 2), which looks similar to violet prickly pear but has long black spines and larger cladodes (flattened, paddle-shaped stems of *Opuntia* species).

All Opuntoid cacti (*Opuntia*, *Cylindropuntia* and *Austrocylindropuntia* spp.) are prohibited or restricted in Queensland, except Indian fig (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) which is grown for its edible fruit and is allowed to be kept, although it occasionally naturalises (reproduces outside of cultivation). Disappointingly, Opuntoid cacti are popular with collectors and are among the most commonly detected prohibited and restricted plants. For more on one of the most popular cactus species, the bunny ears cactus (*Opuntia microdasys*), see the *Have you seen these weeds* section below.



Fig. 1

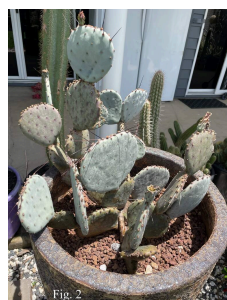


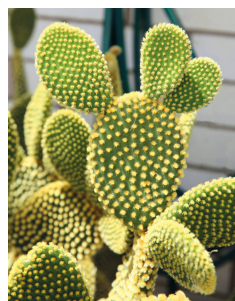
Fig. 2

Opuntoid cacti, along with non-native acacia (*Vachellia*, *Acaciella* and *Senegalia* spp.), [horsetails](#) (*Equisetum* spp.), [Kochia](#) (*Kochia scoparia*) and [red Sesbania](#) (*Sesbania punicea*) are the targets of a surveillance campaign being undertaken by Biosecurity Queensland in the Central Region to detect high-risk (prohibited and restricted) ornamental plants. Detecting high-risk invasives while they are still in cultivation is true early detection. Targeted searches improve the probability of early detection, reducing the likelihood of establishment at further sites and improving the probability of successful eradication. Population centres are key pathways for high-risk ornamentals to escape into the environment, including propagation and/or sale by plant collectors and gardeners who may or may not be aware of the risk their plants pose to our native ecosystems and agricultural systems. Since July 2024, 22 detections of high-risk ornamentals have been made in the Central Region, resulting in the destruction of 36 plants, including [cha-om](#) (*Senegalia insuavis*), [Opuntoid cacti](#), [water mimosa](#) (*Neptunia plena*) and [madras thorn](#) (*Pithecellobium dulce*).

How can you help? Weed Spotters can keep an eye out for high-risk (prohibited and restricted) ornamental plants, including Opuntoid cacti, being sold online or in markets, grown in gardens, or illegally dumped. If you suspect you have seen a plant of concern, please do not approach the seller/grower, instead send photos or screenshots to your Weed Spotters [regional coordinator](#) or contact Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23** or [online](#).

*Acknowledgments: Sina Leis, Biosecurity Queensland*

### Have you seen these weeds?



#### *Opuntia microdasys* (bunny ears cactus)

Bunny ears cactus is a dense shrub 40-60cm tall with round to oval pads that grow in pairs, giving the appearance of bunny ears, with numerous white or yellow glochids (hair-like spines), 2-3mm long, in dense clusters.

[Find out more](#)



#### *Pithecellobium dulce* (Madras thorn)

Madras thorn is a tree up to 20m tall with a pair of short, sharp spines at the base of each leaf and pinkish pods that are often twisted or soiled, containing white pulp and shiny reddish-black seeds.

[Find out more](#)



#### *Sesbania punicea* (red Sesbania)



Red Sesbania is a shrub or tree up to 4m tall with many slender branches, distinctive winged seed pods and bright red pea-flowers in hanging clusters.

[Find out more](#)

## Monthly weed notifications

There were 2 weed notifications for February 2025.

[Find out more](#)

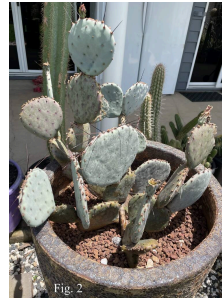


Fig. 2

## Regional coordinator profile: Mark Maughan



Mark Maughan works as a Biosecurity Compliance Officer with Toowoomba Regional Council. In this role he focusses on new incursions, restricted and prohibited invasive species ranging from cacti to weedy *Sporobolus* grasses. He is keen to learn and assist in identifying emerging pests in the Toowoomba region. Mark is the weed spotter regional coordinator for Toowoomba and can assist you with the identification of weeds found in the region:

[Mark.Maughan@tr.qld.gov.au](mailto:Mark.Maughan@tr.qld.gov.au)

## Emerging weeds to watch for in your region this month:

- [South East Queensland](#)
- [Burnett-Mary](#)
- [Queensland Murray Darling Region](#)
- [Condamine](#)
- [Desert Channels](#)
- [South West Queensland](#)
- [Fitzroy Basin](#)
- [Mackay-Whitsunday](#)
- [Southern Gulf](#)
- [Northern Gulf](#)
- [Dry Tropics](#)
- [Wet Tropics](#)
- [Cape York](#)
- [Torres Strait](#)

## New to the Weed Spotters Network?

Members of the Weed Spotters Network aim to detect and report new and emerging high-risk priority target weeds before they become established in Queensland. Are you ready to start spotting weeds in your region? [Download the Weed Spotters Handbook](#).

If you suspect that you have found a weed that is a [prohibited](#) or [restricted](#) ([Category 2](#)) [invasive plant](#), contact Biosecurity Queensland on **13 25 23**, email photos to [Queensland.Herbarium@qld.gov.au](mailto:Queensland.Herbarium@qld.gov.au) or contact your [Weed Spotters regional coordinator](#).



## Missed something?

Previous Weed Spotters bulletins are available [online](#)



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[Weed Spotters Network Queensland](#) is a joint project between the [Queensland Herbarium](#), the [Department of Primary Industries](#) and local governments with funding support from the Land Protection Fund.

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