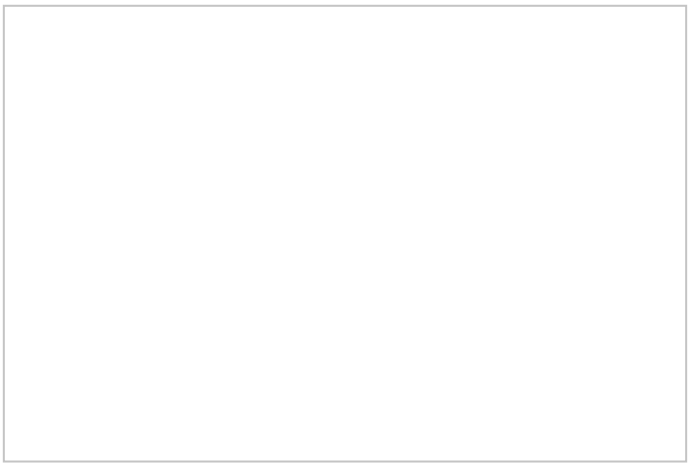
Prickly-pear



Theï*Opuntia ficus-indica*, cultivated since remote times and now naturalized in many tropical, subtropical and warm-temperate regions, is thought to be native to Mexico.
Shrubby plant, with stems tall up to 5 m formed by flattened segments, the cladodes, which are modified stems, with an obovate to elliptic form, 20-50 cm long, 10-25 cm broad and 2-3 cm thick, with grey or green-grey epidermis, to which is entrusted the photosynthetic function; a thin waxy coat covers their surface with the purpose to limit the transpiration, and therefore the loss of liquids, and to reflect part of the light.
During its growth the cladodes are provided with rudimental conical leaves, 3-4 mm long, spirally placed, which persist for short time.
The best places for the cultivation are the rocky or sandy, dry or semi-dry, soils, even poor provided perfectly draining, in full sun in areas with average annual temperatures over the 18ï C; therefore areas not easily utilizable for other cultivations.
For what the resistance to the low temperatures is concerned, the young plants can get already damages with temperatures around the -3ï C, adult plants can resist without too much damage up to about -6ï C, whilst the base, if lignified, can survive for short time up to -10ï C.
On the ornamental point of view, its best collocation is in vast desert gardens, where in any case its positioning is to be greatly cared, far away from passage areas, seen the size it can reach, the glochids and possible thorns; for these characteristics, it is also an excellent plant for realizing defensive barriers.
Due to its ample range and the long time in cultivation, it has originated several varieties which differentiate both for the characteristics of the fruit and of the cladodes, selected depending on the utilizations for which they are planned.ïThe fruits, which are to be carefully handled due to the presence of the annoying and painful glochids, are consumed fresh or transformed for the production of alcoholic drinks, juices, jams, etc.

Category: Succulent plants
Families: Cactaceae
Genus: Opuntia

Species: ficus indica
Geographical Area of Origin: Central America
Climatic Zones: Mediterranean: South and islands, hills. USDA 10 a
Habit: Succulent
Leaves: Evergreen
Colore Foglie: Verde
Flowering Period: Aprile / Maggio / Giugno / Luglio / Agosto / Settembre
Flower: Simple flower
Colore Fiori: Giallo ï Rosso ï Viola
Favorite soil: Sub-alkaline /Medium alkaline / Neutral / Middle-Dough / Medium soil
Water needs: Low / little water
Light Exposure: Full light / Full sun
Form: Grown as shrub / bush
Colore Frutti: Verde ï Giallo ï Rosso ï Arancione ï Bianco ï Rosa ï Viola