

The ENEMY: Pricklypear cactus (*Opuntia columbiana*)

Strategy: Pricklypear cactus is a native plant for our region. This perennial plant rarely reaches 8 inches in height and has a fibrous root system. Its most notable feature are the modified leaves or spines that protect it from predators. The plant produces mostly yellow flowers, but I have seen them in light shades of orange.

Attack: Although quite edible to humans and livestock (once you have scorched the spines off): I understand when boiled it tastes like avocado. Generally not fed upon due to its spines other than small rodents that can work around the spines. This plant when found in small pastures can be harmful to the feet of animals and deter animals from grazing certain sites. It is a great succulent plant for areas.

Defense: As mentioned not many animals will graze on this plant, thus there are few biological controls for it. Generally this plant does not grow aggressive enough to become a problem, but if it does one can control the smaller plants by digging it up with a shovel. Just make sure you get most of the roots. If you want to make it a casualty of war, use Triclopyr ester (Crossbow) or if you have a pesticide license, Picloram (Tordon 22K) is best. It will take a couple of applications to completely remove it.