

Botanical Name: *Opuntia santa rita*

Common Name: Santa Rita Prickly Pear, Purple Prickly Pear



Family: Cactaceae

Habitat: Rocky slopes

Native Distribution: SE Arizona through SW Texas and into Sonora, Mexico

Elevation: 2,000 to 4,000 ft

Hardiness: 10°F

Type: Evergreen

Size: 4' tall x 6' wide

Shape: Irregular

Growth Rate: Moderate

Flowers: 3-4" pale lemon yellow waxy blooms

Bloom Season: Late spring

Fruit: 1" fleshy purplish fruit follows blooming

Foliage: 5-6" purple pads dotted with glochids with spines often occurring along the top edges

Exposure: Full/reflected sun

Shade: Minimal

Water Requirements: Very low

In the Landscape: *Opuntia santa rita* makes a bold statement in Phoenix xeriscapes. Use as a barrier along property lines or as security under windows. Also works well with other cacti and succulents, as well as native shrubs and wildflowers. Low maintenance.

Wildlife: Attracts desert animals, especially tortoises and squirrels which eat the fruits.

Other Stuff:

- Look for cultivar *Opuntia santa rita* 'Tubac' which hold its purplish color longer.
- Santa Rita Prickly Pear will become more purple in response to cold or drought conditions.
- Propagate Santa Rita Prickly Pear by cutting a pad at its joint, allowing it to callous over for about a week and planting it in the ground.
- *Opuntia santa rita* can become infested with cochineal scale, a scale insect that forms a cottony substance, which can be easily hosed off with repeated washings.