

Sulphur cactus

Prohibited invasive plant

Look. Report. Protect. 13 25 23



- It is illegal to keep, cultivate, transport or sell sulphur cactus in Queensland.
- Low spreading shrub with multiple stems growing up to 70 cm high.
- Pad segments are obovate, 8–32 cm long, 5–14 cm wide.
- Flowers are yellow, 4–7 cm wide. Fruit are egg-shaped, 3–4.5 cm long.
- Early detection and reporting helps protect Queensland's natural environment.

Description

Native to northwestern region of Argentina, sulphur cactus (*Opuntia sulphurea*) is a low spreading shrub growing up to 70 cm high, forming patches 1–2 m wide. Flowers are yellow, 4–7 cm wide. Flowering occurs mostly in late spring and summer. The pad segments are green, sometimes tinged purplish, obovate, 8–32 cm long and 5–14 cm wide. Each pad can have up to eight white to brownish, yellow to red sharp thick spines up to 4.5 cm long. It produces numerous, single fruit around the pads. Fruit are egg-shaped, red-purple, up to 4.5 cm long and 2.5 cm wide.

Stem fragments spread by becoming attached to animals, footwear and vehicles and are also dispersed in dumped garden waste. The fruit are eaten by various animals including birds and foxes and spread in their droppings. Sulphur cactus prefers arid and semi-arid areas, and sometimes also warmer temperate regions. It can invade pastures, rocky outcrops, open woodlands and ranges.

Biosecurity risk

Sulphur cactus is a prohibited invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. In Queensland it is illegal to sell sulphur cactus on Gumtree, Ebay, Facebook, at markets, nurseries or any marketplace. Prohibited species must be reported immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23.

Sulphur cactus can impact on ecosystems, waterways and agriculture. The spines are sharp, can penetrate human skin causing severe irritation and are difficult to remove. If permitted to spread, sulphur cactus could invade vast areas, much like the prickly pear cactus did.

What should I do?

If you think you have seen sulphur cactus, report it immediately to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or scan the QR code to access our reporting web page. Until an authorised officer contacts you, please take reasonable and practical steps to prevent sulphur cactus from spreading.

More information

Contact Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

