

Opuntia santa-rita
Santa Rita pricklypear

Why Observe?

Species included in the *Nature's Notebook* monitoring program have been identified by scientists or natural resource managers as ecologically or economically important either regionally or at the continental scale. Many of these species are commonly found within their ecosystem. Your observations made on this species help to better understand the timing of phenological events in relation to seasonal and long term change.

Tips for Identification

This low-growing prickly pear cactus forms large clumps and has a short trunk growing to heights of two to five feet with an equal spread. It produces flat, round, reddish-purple pads that grow to eight inches. The color of the pads intensifies when the plant is stressed by cold weather or drought conditions. Its flowers are orange-red in color and appear in late spring. After flowering, the plant develops an oblong, purple, plump fruit. This cactus is native to Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Sonora, Mexico at elevations of 2,000 to 4,000 feet.

<https://www.horticultureunlimited.com/plant-guide/santa-rita-prickly-pear/>

Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a "?" for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.



Dionna Hatch. [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#)



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Flowers or flower buds

One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.



Dionna Hatch.

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Open flowers

One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



Patty Guertin.

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Fruits

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Opuntia santa-rita*, the fruit is fleshy and berry-like and changes from green to red.



Patty Guertin.

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Ripe fruits

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Opuntia santa-rita*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned red.

Phenophases not pictured: Recent fruit or seed drop