

Botanical Name: Opuntia basilaris

Common Name: Beavertail cactus

Type of Plant: Dicot: succulent Family Cactaceae

Habit of Growth:

Overall Shape a very distinctive prickly-pear cactus, with pale lavender obovate to round fleshy modified stems; forms a low open mound with age

Height 1 - 2ft Spread equal or more Growth Rate slow

Environment:

Exposure full sun preferred; tolerates some shade if grown in container

Soil thrives in sandy soils; tolerates heavier if watered only seldom

Hardiness hardy (zones 11-13, 18-24): prefers warm dry inland habitats

Morphology:

Leaves absent - the flattened "stem joints" ("pads") are photosynthetic; pads are pale lavender, flattened, oval - obovate; 8 - 12" long x 5 - 8" wide; are spineless but have numerous deciduous little glochids at the nodes (areoles)

Flowers bright rose-lavender, solitary, many-petaled and many-stamened, 3" across; borne on upper edge of the upright pads; April - June

Fruit somewhat fleshy berry, 1 - 2" long; greenish tan when ripe (fall)

Propagation: seed; pads are slow to root compared to many other prickly pear cacti

Usage: a very distinctive small accent shrub for its unusual-colored fleshy pads, showy flower display in late spring, and low open clumping form; best in desert, Mediterranean or dry-woodland theme gardens; excellent container plant

Landscape Care:

Watering little required after establishment; twice a month when grown in a container - once a month if planted

Fertilizing none required except of grown in container

Pruning not required

Pests/Diseases relatively free - may get scale / mealybug if grown in shade

Other avoid frequent watering if plant grown in heavier soils

Origin: low-elevation hillsides of southwestern US deserts (Calif./Ariz.)