



Fast Facts!

Eastern Prickly Pear

Opuntia humifusa
in the Waterwise Garden

- Virginia native, also known as, devil's tongue, tuna, sabra, or paddle cactus.
- Native Americans used it medicinally to treat ailments such as rattlesnake bites.
- Grows in full sun in dry, sandy or rocky areas across Virginia, and eastern United States.
- Huge variation in color from yellow flowers to red seed pods, with green cactus pads.
- When in bloom, it attracts bees, and is nectar for butterflies and moths. It flowers in May, June, and July.
- Animals such as birds, raccoons, and opossums eat the fruit capsules and spread the plant's seeds.
- The cactus can reproduce asexually when the pads root into the ground.
- Ouch! Handle this plant with heavy gloves because of its spines and very fine hairs, called glochids, that can be found at the base of the more predominant spines.
- It's both a fruit and vegetable. Ripe, peeled fruit capsules are edible.
- Pads can be roasted and eaten as a vegetable - after removing the spines.
- It was also used to make moonshine in the 2003 Russell Crowe movie *Master and Commander*.
- Visit www.plantnovanatives.org for information about this and other native plants.