Tulip Prickly Pear Cactus

Opuntia phaeacantha

Height: 6 inches

Spread: 12 inches

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 8b

Other Names: Desert Prickly Pear, Mojave Prickly Pear

Description:

This southwest native cactus produces orange-yellow flower buds that resemble a tulip; buds then fully open to sunny yellow blooms; excellent for indoor or patio containers

Features & Attributes

Tulip Prickly Pear Cactus is a tiny succulent evergreen plant. It is a member of the cactus family, which are grown primarily for their characteristic shapes, their interesting features and textures, and their high tolerance for hot, dry growing environments. As an 'opuntiad' type of cactus, it doesn't actually have leaves, but rather modified succulent stems that comprise the bulk of the plant, and which are designed to retain water for long periods of time. This particular cactus is valued for its upright and spreading habit of growth This plant has lemon yellow cup-shaped flowers with red eyes at the ends of the stems in mid summer, which emerge from distinctive dark red flower buds, and which are interesting on close inspection.



Tulip Prickly Pear Cactus flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Tulip Prickly Pear Cactus in bloom
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Planting & Growing

When grown indoors, Tulip Prickly Pear Cactus can be expected to grow to be only 6 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 12 inches. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 10 years. This houseplant will do well in a location that gets either direct or indirect sunlight, although it will usually require a more brightly-lit environment than what artificial indoor lighting alone can provide. This is a unique plant in that it requires extremely dry, well-drained soil, and it will die if left in standing water for any length of time - in fact it will suffer if it is over-watered. The soil should be allowed to go completely dry to the touch an inch or two deep for prolonged periods, and it may only need watering once every few weeks. Be aware that your particular watering schedule may vary depending on its location in the room, the pot size, plant size and other conditions; if in doubt, ask one of our experts in the store for advice. Like most succulents and cacti, it prefers to grow in poor soils and should therefore never be fertilized. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in sandy soil. Contact the store for specific recommendations on pre-mixed potting soil for this plant.

There are many factors that will affect the ultimate height, spread and overall performance of a plant when grown indoors; among them, the size of the pot it's growing in, the amount of light it receives, watering frequency, the pruning regimen and repotting schedule. Use the information described here as a guideline only; individual performance can and will vary. Please contact the store to speak with one of our experts if you are interested in further details concerning recommendations on pot size, watering, pruning, repotting, etc.