

# WEED INFORMATION SHEET

## SMOOTH TREE PEAR



**Smooth Tree Pear** – *Opuntia monacantha* (previously named *Opuntia vulgaris*) is a tree like plant with a distinct trunk. It is mostly about 2-3 metres high but older plants can grow up to 6 metres with trunks 30cm in diameter. The pads are glossy green, the flowers yellow and the fruit red, the spines are long and straight.

A single plant will produce thousands of viable seeds each summer. The seeds can be dispersed easily by wind, water and animals, particularly birds which feed on the ripe fruit. The seeds can remain viable for very long periods and are capable of germinating at least 20 years after production.



The reasons for success of Smooth Tree Pear as a weed include its ability to produce large quantities of viable seed, to repel grazing animals, to propagate and spread vegetatively, to disperse its seeds in edible fruit, to survive adverse climatic conditions and for its seed to remain viable and dormant for many years. All spiny 'eyes' on stem segments are growing points that produce roots once in contact with soil. Detached stem-segments may remain alive for months, or even years, before taking root.

Photo's by B.Shepherd & M.Edmonds