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Agriculture Protection Board  
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# HARRISIA CACTUS



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1. Mature Plant 2. Flower 3. Flower

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# HARRISIA CACTUS

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**H**ARRISIA cactus (*Eriocereus martinii* and *E. tortuosus*) is a native of northern Argentina and Paraguay.

It was introduced to Queensland as a pot plant in 1888 and has since become a major weed problem in the Collinsville district.

Harrisia cactus is difficult to control chemically because of its persistent underground tubers.

There is no known biological control method. Insects which attack Prickly pear do not attack Harrisia cactus.

Occasional plants have been observed in the pastoral districts of Western Australia, but so far no serious infestations are known.

Harrisia cactus is a declared plant (noxious weed) in the Pilbara of Western Australia.

## **Description:**

Harrisia cactus is a perennial succulent plant with an extensive fleshy root system.

It has long, slender, fluted stems covered in sharp spines. The stems spread over the ground, covering large areas. The flowers are large and white, shaped like a funnel.

They open at night—hence the common name 'Moonlight Cactus'. Each flower produces a bright red fruit containing from 400 to 1000 small black seeds in a white pulp.

The root system penetrates deeply into suitable soils forming tubers as food storage organs.

Harrisia cactus is spread by seeds and by vegetative means. Portions of the stem readily take root in damp soil when cut off from the parent plant.

The seeds are spread by birds, wild pigs and in flood waters. Germination is stimulated by light and a period of cold and occurs when conditions are damp. The seeds can remain viable for up to 7 years when stored dry.

The underground tubers are attractive to wild pigs, which spread the plant by rooting the tubers out.

It is essential to prevent the establishment of Harrisia cactus in Western Australia.

***For identification of suspected Harrisia cactus plants, contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Jarrah Road, South Perth, Telephone (09) 367 0111 or any local office of the Agriculture Protection Board or the Department of Agriculture.***