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Opuntia

Cactaceae

Opuntia is believed to have been derived originally from the name of a town in ancient Greece, Opus, by the 1st Century Roman natural historian, Pliny the Elder (23-79). He applied it to a, since then, unknown plant which grew around this town and was considered to be particularly palatable by local inhabitants. Apparently the plant was completely different from cacti in today's *Opuntia* genus. It is noted that according to some experts the town's name Opus was also known as Opuntia or Opuntis which is said to mean 'the town of figs'.

Warning – animals.

Indian fig cactus *Opuntia ficus-indica*

The sharp spines can cause internal injury if consumed by animals.

Warning – humans.

Prickly pear *Opuntia vulgaris*

The fruit should be handled in tough gloves until their outer skin has been cut away to avoid both obvious and overlooked spines.