Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus

Opuntia basilaris 'Baby Rita'



Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 10 inches

Spread: 24 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: 6

Description:

A heat loving, dwarf selection with brilliant salmon flowers that bloom in spring; small, purple tinged, blue-green pads turn vibrant purple in winter; an exceptional accent for rock gardens or planters; needs good drainage and sandy or gravelly soils

Ornamental Features

Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus 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 salmon cup-shaped flowers at the ends of the stems from mid to late spring, which are interesting on close inspection.

Landscape Attributes

Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus is a small succulent evergreen plant with an upright spreading habit of growth. As a type of cactus, it has no true foliage; the body of the plant is wholly comprised of a linked series of spiny plum purple pads which are connected together to form the branches of the plant.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and should never be pruned except to remove any dieback, as it tends not to take pruning well. Stray segments or shoots can be carefully removed or thinned to control the overall form and spread of the plant. Deer don't particularly care for this plant and will usually leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Rock/Alpine Gardens
- General Garden Use
- Groundcover
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus will grow to be about 8 inches tall at maturity, with a spread of 24 inches. It grows at a medium rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for approximately 20 years.

This plant should only be grown in full sunlight. It prefers dry to average moisture levels with very well-drained soil, and will often die in standing water. It is considered to be drought-tolerant, and thus makes an ideal choice for a low-water garden or xeriscape application. Like most succulents and cacti, this plant 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 soils. It is quite intolerant of urban pollution, therefore inner city or urban streetside plantings are best avoided. This is a selection of a native North American species. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.

Baby Rita Prickly Pear Cactus is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. It is often used as a 'filler' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination, providing a mass of flowers and foliage against which the larger thriller plants stand out. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.