

Environmental Alert

Monday, 15 May 2017



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



BIOSECURITY ALERT

MYRTLE RUST *Austropuccinia psidii*

Also known as guava rust and eucalyptus rust

PURPOSE

We need you to be vigilant, keep your eyes out for symptoms of myrtle rust in New Zealand and to know what to do if you see them. This is serious. Conditions for detecting myrtle rust in New Zealand are ideal now.

THE THREAT

Myrtle rust is a fungus which can have serious consequences on various species of plants in the myrtle family, including New Zealand native plants such as:

- » Pōhutukawa
- » Rata
- » Mānuka
- » Kānuka
- » Ramarama
- » Rōhutu
- » Swamp maire

A number of introduced plants are also susceptible to myrtle rust, including, feijoa, eucalypts and bottle brushes.

WHAT'S AT RISK, WHERE DO I LOOK?

Myrtle rust only affects plants from the Myrtaceae plant family. This includes some of New Zealand's most iconic indigenous plants – rata, pohutukawa, manuka, kanuka and ramarama – as well as exotic myrtles like feijoa, guava and eucalypts.

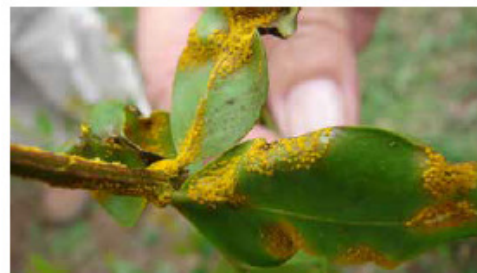
It attacks new leaves on many plants and mature leaves on others. It can suppress flowering and seed development on some host plants. Repeated infections can kill the plant.

If it becomes widespread it will impact all of New Zealand's Myrtaceae to some degree and we are likely to lose some Myrtaceae in their natural state. Ecological integrity will be compromised in places where myrtles are a dominant species. It is also likely to affect commercial activities (e.g. manuka honey industry), tourism, recreation and landscape values.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE SEEN IT

DO NOT TOUCH! DO CLEAN, DO REPORT

1. If you think you've spotted myrtle rust, don't touch the infection – this will spread the disease. Rust spores are windblown like talcum powder and if you're in the vicinity you'll be the biggest spread risk.
2. Take a photo if you can, without touching any plant material.
3. Mark the site with a ribbon or similar, ensure you can describe your whereabouts.
4. Phone the MPI hotline **0800 80 99 66** immediately.



Remember, myrtle rust can be transported on clothing and equipment. If you think you've come into contact with myrtle rust, please wash your clothes and clean your equipment such as tools and boots carefully.

MORE INFORMATION IS AT:

Ministry for Primary Industries: www.mpi.govt.nz/alerts

Department of Conservation: www.doc.govt.nz/

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5. If you become contaminated you'll need to decontaminate yourself as best you can. Ideally:
 - Spray the garment with alcohol/methylated spirits or Sterigene.
 - Place the garment in a plastic bag, surface sterilise the bag and place into another bag. Leave it on the spot.
 - Spray and clean footwear.
 - Spray the site where you changed from the garment with alcohol/methylated spirits or Sterigene.
 - GPS the spot.
 - Notify MPI and your DOC office immediately of the location.
 - If you cannot move from the site without spreading contamination stay put (but put your safety first) and radio for someone to bring you the required equipment to decontaminate.
6. If it is a false alarm, it doesn't matter! Please be vigilant and err on the side of caution.

DO NOT TOUCH THE PLANT OR ATTEMPT TO COLLECT A SAMPLE.

If you have a camera or phone, take a photo of both the rust symptoms and the plant they are on. Make a careful note of the location of the affected plant/s. MPI will send investigators to the site to collect samples safely.

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Important:

If you find Myrtle Rust – stop the job – conduct a hold point, take a photo as noted in the Biosecurity Alert and note the location on the affected plants; contact your works coordinator/QSE who will contact MPI

Remember: to wash clothes and clean your equipment – tools, boots and vehicle.

For further information contact: Rachel Leadbeater-Bailey, QSE Coordinator, TLS Northern Region – Mobile: 021 225 7489