

Myrtle Rust

A biosecurity risk for Tasmania

Myrtle rust is a disease limited to the Myrtaceae family that is caused by the rust fungus *Uredo rangellii*. This rust is a member of the guava rust complex that includes *Uredo Psidii*, a known significant pathogen of Myrtaceae outside Australia.

Infestations are currently limited to NSW and Queensland. So far, myrtle rust has not been detected in Tasmania.

The biosecurity risk to Tasmania. Myrtaceae imports are now banned into Tasmania (although DPIPWE may grant an exemption from the ban for an importer that can demonstrate they have an effective risk management process in place). However, accidental or natural (eg wind) vectoring of spores to Tasmania remains a distinct possibility in the long term. There are still some significant gaps in the scientific knowledge about myrtle rust – including whether it could establish and spread in a cooler climate such as ours.

Spread risks. Myrtle rust produces spores that can be spread by wind, with rain splash, by animals (particularly insects) and by people contaminated after handling infected material. In particular, movements of infected plants in the nursery trade or home gardening are both potentially significant vectors for long distance spread of the disease. It is worth noting that myrtle rust infections may be asymptomatic for some weeks following infection.

Identifying Myrtle Rust.

Look on the soft growing tips of Myrtaceae leaves, stems and buds for bright yellow rust pustules during the warmer months.

Myrtle rust is most easily seen in the warmer months, when the humidity is high and the leaves are wet for 6 hours or more. These are the conditions that encourage spore production, spread and infection of new plants.

Current scientific knowledge about myrtle rust is that, typically, temperatures of 15-25°C are required for the myrtle rust life cycle. Under these conditions, fresh active infections are readily identified by the pustules of bright yellow spores on the leaves, petioles, buds and soft fruit of Myrtaceae species. These yellow pustules distinguish it from other Myrtaceae diseases.

In old myrtle rust infections, the pustules become grey and look withered. In young infections, the early signs may be purple flecks and leaf spots. With both young and old infections, it can be more difficult to distinguish between myrtle rust and other Myrtaceae diseases.

If you see what you think might be myrtle rust

1. **Avoid contamination of yourself and any equipment with the spores.**
2. **Take a photograph (do not collect samples).**
3. **Record the location of the infected plant(s) – GPS is ideal, but as good a description of the location as possible.**
4. **Record what you see (what the infection looks like, the extent of the infection, how many plants are infected etc). If you know the species of plant infected, record that too.**
5. **As soon as you can, ring the Emergency Plant Pest hotline on 1800 084 881 (all hours)**

More Information

More myrtle rust information is on the [DPIPWE website](#). This site will be updated if or as the myrtle rust situation changes.

Contact DPIPWE's Biosecurity and Plant Health Branch
Ph : 1300 368 550
Email : Biosecurity.planthealth@dPIPWE.tas.gov.au

A list of the plants in the Myrtaceae family is available on the [DPIPWE website](#).

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Young infections may appear as purple flecks and leaf spots, other leaf diseases may also cause similar symptoms



Mature infections produce yellow pustules, Melaleuca quinquenervia.



Leaves may be distorted by the myrtle rust infection



Turpentine leaf with more severe infection, where rust spots have coalesced



Infected turpentine leaves showing mature pustules that have turned grey with age.



Yellow pustules on Agonis flexuosa cv. after dark

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