



A BIOSECURITY RISK FOR NEW ZEALAND

MYRTLE RUST *Puccinia psidii*

Also known as guava rust, eucalyptus rust or ohia rust



Myrtle rust on willow myrtle (*Agonis flexuosa*).



Myrtle rust on pohutakawa (*Metrosideros* species).

MORE INFORMATION

The following websites provide useful information about myrtle rust:

<http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/guava-rust>

http://www.outbreak.gov.au/pests_diseases/pests_diseases_plant/myrtle-rust/index.html

The threat

Myrtle rust is a plant pathogen which can have serious consequences to various species of plants in the Myrtaceae family. The Myrtaceae family includes eucalypts, feijoas, guava and New Zealand native plants such as pohutakawa, rata, and manuka. While the susceptibility of plants in New Zealand is unknown, some native plants, amenity plants, forests and cut flowers are at risk.

WHAT IS MYRTLE RUST?

Myrtle rust is caused by the fungus *Puccinia psidii* which is native to Brazil. In 2010, myrtle rust was detected in Australia where it has affected more than 200 plant species. Many of the known host plant species in Australia are also grown in New Zealand. Plant susceptibility to this disease is quite varied depending on location and environmental conditions – i.e. this disease affects different species of Myrtaceae in different countries.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

Myrtle rust spores cannot be seen with the naked eye. The spores are easily transported large distances via wind and contaminated clothing and equipment as well as shorter distances via insects and rain splash. Myrtle rust is currently not known to be present in New Zealand. **If it were to arrive, early detection is critical as this disease would be extremely difficult to eradicate.**

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

The identifying symptom of this disease is powdery bright yellow or orange-yellow pustules on actively growing leaves, shoots, flower buds and fruits of infected plants. Leaves may become buckled or twisted and die off. Severe infections can lead to death of susceptible host plants.

If you see myrtle rust in New Zealand, please contact the Ministry for Primary Industries immediately on the

Pests & Diseases Hotline

0800 80 99 66

and report the location.

If possible take a photo. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO COLLECT SAMPLES as this could increase the spread of this disease. MPI will dispatch investigators to collect samples safely.

www.biosecurity.govt.nz

June 2013