

## A BIOSECURITY RISK FOR NEW ZEALAND

# MYRTLE RUST *Puccinia psidii*

Also known as guava rust, eucalyptus rust or ohia rust



Young infection on underside of scrub turpentine, *Rhodamnia rubescens* leaves.



Myrtle rust on broad-leaved paperbark, *Melaleuca quinquenervia*.

Photos: NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI)

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you think you've seen the symptoms of myrtle rust please call the MPI exotic pest and disease hotline immediately on **0800 80 99 66**.

Don't attempt to touch or collect samples as this may increase the spread of the disease. If you have a camera, take a picture instead.

Remember myrtle rust can be transported on clothing and equipment. If you think you've come into contact with myrtle rust spores in New Zealand or overseas, please wash your clothes and clean your equipment such as boots and tools thoroughly.

MPI will send investigators to the site to collect samples safely.

### WHAT IS MYRTLE RUST?

Myrtle rust is a serious fungal disease of plants that has not, as yet, been detected in New Zealand. The fungus attacks various species of plants in the Myrtaceae family, also known as the Myrtle family. Severe infestations can kill affected plants. It can be found in many parts of the world including New Caledonia and eastern Australia.

### THE THREAT

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

- » Pohutakawa
- » Rata
- » Manuka
- » Kanaka
- » Ramarama
- » Rohutu
- » Swamp maire

A number of introduced plants are also susceptible to Myrtle rust, including, feijoa, eucalypts and bottlebrushes.

Myrtle rust spores are microscopic and can easily spread across large distances by wind. The spores are thought to be capable of crossing the Tasman Sea to New Zealand, a pathway the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) cannot manage. Spores can also be transported on contaminated clothing, insects, rain splashes and equipment.

**If myrtle rust were to arrive in New Zealand it would be extremely difficult to eradicate.**

### WHAT DOES MYRTLE RUST LOOK LIKE?

Myrtle rust generally attacks soft new growth including leaf surfaces, shoots, buds, flowers and fruit.

Symptoms to look out for are:

- » bright yellow powdery eruptions appearing on the underside of the leaf (young infection);
- » bright yellow powdery eruptions on both sides of the leaf (mature infection);
- » brown/grey rust pustules (older spores) can appear on older lesions;
- » leaves may become buckled or twisted and die off.

### MORE INFORMATION

The following web sites provide useful information about myrtle rust:

**Ministry for Primary Industries**

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

**Department of Conservation**

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/myrtlerust>

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