

Myrtle rust: everyday management

Plant Biosecurity Unit

Myrtle rust continues to spread across the Australian landscape in the bushland reserves, amenity settings such as parks and street plantings, home gardens and commercial operations such as plant nurseries and timber plantations.

The rust can be spread by different means including wind, movement of infected plants and by spores accidentally falling onto people engaged in activities where rust occurs. Myrtle rust is not harmful to people but can be spread by people.

The rust is known to be commonly found in the Red Zone in NSW where it has been reported from the full range of landscapes and settings. Actions to minimise the movement of the rust in the Red Zone are associated with the threats to enterprises and landscapes that will be adversely affected by the rust.

Areas containing significant plant communities such as those with threatened species and many nurseries are vulnerable to the negative effects of the rust. Putting in place actions to reduce the likelihood of them becoming infected is appropriate.

The Green Zone is the area outside the Red Zone and the rust is not commonly found in this zone. Actions should be taken to reduce the likelihood of spreading rust from the Red Zone to the Green Zone.

Should I Take Action?

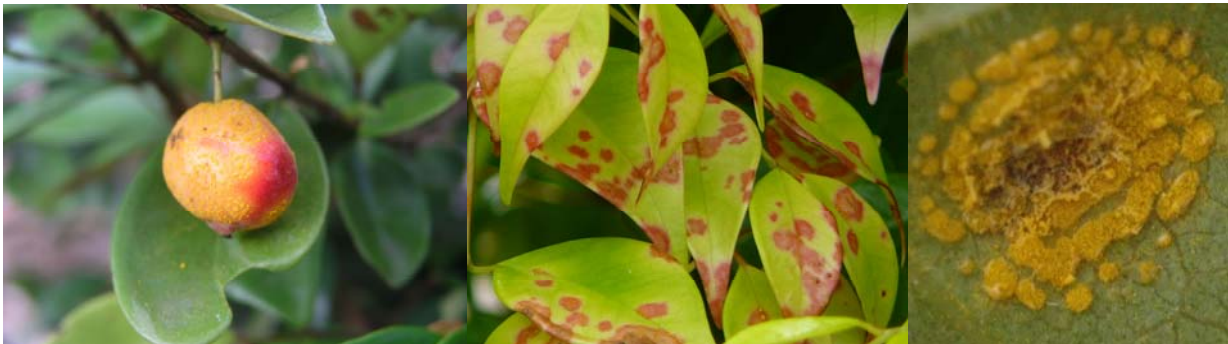
Where there is potential to spread Myrtle rust to a vulnerable species or plant community or into the Green Zone actions should be taken to reduce the chances of that happening.

People engaged in activities which are most likely to spread the rust are those who are actively moving around plants known to have, or likely to have the rust. People going about their normal activities inside the Red Zone are not likely to need to take action unless they are involved with vulnerable enterprises such as a nursery or entering locations identified to contain at-risk plants and plant communities.

Important questions to ask are:

- Will my actions spread the rust to the Green Zone?
- Will my actions spread the rust to a vulnerable and important plant species or community – even if they are in the Red Zone?
- What can I do and how can I change my actions so that I do not spread Myrtle rust?

Thinking about and answering these questions is like doing a risk assessment. To help you, an example of a risk assessment matrix is attached in Appendix 1. This is a guide only and shows the steps taken to assess risk in various hypothetical situations. Using this guide you may choose to develop a similar matrix to assess and mitigate risk in your particular circumstances.



What Can I Do?

Actions to reduce the risk of spreading Myrtle rust depend on reducing the chances of moving the rust from an infected area to an uninfected or vulnerable area. The Red Zone is known to be infected; the Green Zone is not (see <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust/zones>). Within the Red Zone there will be locations such as nurseries and specific at-risk plant communities where efforts should be taken to assist in keeping the rust out.

For example:

- Do not move plants known to be infected with Myrtle rust
- Relocate planned activities from known or likely infected areas to another place if possible
- Consider an alternative activity(s)
- Implement simple measures to reduce the risk of moving rust spores including
 - » Launder clothing, hats and gloves worn during activities in high risk areas before re-using them in areas where plants may be susceptible to the rust.
 - » Normal laundering is adequate although some special attention may be required for clothing such as chainsaw PPE.
 - » Wash external surfaces of equipment and vehicles. Although no special cleansing agents are required, products such as *Farmcleanse* can be used to decontaminate machinery and equipment prior to washing.
 - » Always try to start new jobs with clean equipment and clean vehicles.
 - » The surfaces of equipment that may be sensitive to washing or vehicle seats and interiors can be wiped down with alcohol wipes or similar products.
- Comply with risk management and mitigation measures that business enterprises and sites of vulnerable plants and plant communities have in place.

Where suspect rust is found at a location thought to be free of the rust, such as in the Green Zone, the details of the location should be reported to 1800 084 881 or

biosecurity@industry.nsw.gov.au. Where new species of plants which are not listed as Myrtle rust hosts at

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/plant/myrtle-rust/hosts> are suspected to be affected by Myrtle rust, send photos to

biosecurity@industry.nsw.gov.au

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (April 2011). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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Activity	Source of risk	Area of impact	Risk rating	Mitigation steps	Overall Risk Rating
Clearing bushland, bush regeneration and working in direct contact with plants.	Movement of Myrtle rust spores from the Red Zone to unaffected areas on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - equipment - machinery - vehicles 	Green Zone or Red Zone clean area commercial plantations threatened species	High	Implement strong biosecurity measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply contact fungicide to plants before moving or removing them • Dispose of waste securely • Use disposable overalls over clothing when working among diseased plants and waste • Launder clothing including hats and gloves before moving to next site • Wash vehicles and equipment following decontamination with Farmcleanse or 70% ethanol after completion of work at contaminated sites 	Low
Surveying and jobs involving some direct contact with plants.	Movement of Myrtle rust spores from the Red Zone to unaffected areas on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - equipment - vehicles 	Green Zone or Red Zone clean area commercial plantations threatened species	Medium	Implement basic biosecurity measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launder clothing including hats and gloves before moving to a new worksite • Wash vehicles and equipment following decontamination with Farmcleanse or 70% ethanol before moving to a new worksite 	Low
Trimming trees and mulching.	Movement of Myrtle rust spores from the Red Zone to unaffected areas on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - equipment - machinery - vehicles 	Green Zone or Red Zone clean area street trees gardens	High	If target trees appear infected, implement strong biosecurity measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see the example “clearing bushland” • In addition, include solarisation or composting of mulch before on-selling. If target trees appear clean, implement basic biosecurity measures : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see the example “surveying” 	Low
Using bush and forest roads and tracks	Movement of Myrtle rust spores from the Red Zone to unaffected areas on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clothing - vehicles 	Green Zone or Red Zone clean area, commercial plantations, threatened species gardens	Medium	Implement general precautionary biosecurity measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay on cleared roads or tracks • Wash vehicles, before going home • Launder clothing, helmets etc upon returning home 	Low