

Myrtle rust in my backyard

Myrtle Rust Local Control Centre

Handout prepared in December 2010

Myrtle Rust is a plant fungal disease that was first diagnosed in NSW in Myrtaceae family plants in April 2010. Myrtle Rust can be spread by people moving infected plant material, contaminated equipment, clothing and vehicles. It can also spread by wind, insects and other animals.

Myrtle Rust has been identified on hosts in nurseries, residential properties, and bushland. Myrtle Rust will continue to spread where conditions are favourable and Myrtaceae hosts are present which may include your backyard.

People can limit the spread of this disease by following the measures outlined in the information sheet - [Preventing the spread of Myrtle Rust in bushland](#). Where Myrtle Rust is suspected in your backyard, treatments available include applying fungicides; removal of host plants; or doing nothing. Reporting to I&I NSW will enable the tracking of the spread of infection.

Hosts

Myrtle Rust is known only to affect Myrtaceae plants. There are more than 25 known host species. Refer to the current known [host list and images](#) on the Industry and Investment NSW (I&I NSW) website.

Some hosts are affected more severely than others. The long-term effect on plants is unknown under Australian conditions.

Location

Plants with Myrtle Rust were first identified on the Central Coast on NSW. Myrtle Rust has been found in nurseries and residential properties in some towns along the NSW coast.

Infected bushland has been confirmed on the NSW Central Coast. No Myrtle rust has been detected in other Australian states.

The regions known to be infected will change as the spread of Myrtle Rust continues. The Central Coast is currently known to be heavily infected with spread occurring to the north and south of this area. Backyards in these areas are likely to be infected due to local spread.



Myrtle Rust on Austromyrtus (Gossia) inophloia 'Blushing Beauty'

Identification

To identify Myrtle Rust on plants:

- Do not move the plant as this will spread the fungal spores
- Refer to the photos on the Myrtle Rust website
- Take a photo to your local nursery or send a photo to I&I NSW biosecurity@industry.nsw.gov.au.
- Surveillance visits by I&I NSW personnel may only occur in new regions of infection and/or significant new host species. Surveillance visits will not occur on the Central Coast.

Treatment

A number of treatments are possible if Myrtle Rust is suspected on your plants. These include:

1. Spraying with an approved fungicide
2. Removing and disposal of diseased plants
3. Doing nothing
4. Removing and disposal of healthy plants

1. Fungicide

Fungicides have been effective in the control of Myrtle Rust. Rotation of fungicides between products containing different active ingredients is recommended to ensure fungicide applications remain effective.

A number of different fungicides have been registered for the control of Myrtle Rust. Refer to the [permit](#) for the lists of the active ingredients.

Only some of the listed fungicides are available for residential use. Larger fungicide application jobs should be referred to an accredited spray contractor.

It is recommended that susceptible host plants be removed in highly infected areas, as reinfection after fungicide application is highly likely.

2. Removing diseased plants

Affected plants should be removed and disposed of in a way that minimises the spread of Myrtle Rust. Plants may have affected parts of plants pruned and the plant treated with fungicide – use similar techniques as described below.

1. Spray infected and unaffected plants with a fungicide 3-4 days prior to removal as any spores dislodged during removal will not infect other plants. When fungicide treatment is not possible, wet the plants prior to removal to dampen and wash off any spores likely to be dispersed during removal.
2. Remove plant. Techniques will vary according to the size and number of plants.
 - Smaller plants can be enclosed in a plastic bag before being either pulled or dug out.
 - Larger plants that do not fit in waste bins can be cut into smaller pieces and securely covered with black plastic or similar for 3-4 weeks in a sunny spot. This process is called solarisation.



Myrtle Rust on Agonis flexuosa (Willow Myrtle) 'Afterdark'

3. Dispose of plants.

- Small plants enclosed in plastic bags can be put in a normal waste bin - NOT the green waste bin.
- Larger plants can be taken to the tip (not the green waste section unless spores have been killed by fungicide or solarisation) or placed in garbage bins.

Ensure people removing plants and the equipment used are cleaned before moving onto other activities that may infect further plants.

3. Doing nothing

The long term affect on plants is unknown under Australian conditions. Where plants are left to determine if they survive, other Myrtaceae plants in the area may become infected in the interim as fungal spores will continue to be dispersed.

4. Removing healthy plants

Plants can be removed before they become infected with Myrtle Rust especially when they are likely to become severely affected (see known host list) and there are only a small numbers of plants. Unaffected plants can be put in the normal green waste bin or composted.

Replanting

Replacing removed plants with either known Myrtle Rust hosts or other Myrtaceae plants may result in re-infection.

Plants that are unlikely to be infected (eg. non-Myrtaceae plants) should be selected. Contact your local nursery for assistance.

Bushland areas including regeneration sites should use local plants not known to be affected by Myrtle Rust.

Reporting

Reporting is useful in regions where Myrtle Rust is not known to be present and for unknown hosts. This information will assist in tracking the spread of infection and updating the known host list.

Report when:

1. You are in a region not known to be infected (see I&I NSW website for a map of the infected zone)
OR
2. You have found Myrtle Rust on a plant that is not a known host (see I&I NSW website for known hosts)

People on the Central Coast should only report if they think they have found a new host.

Report Myrtle Rust to Industry and Investment NSW on the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 or email details to biosecurity@industry.nsw.gov.au

You will need to provide the following details:

1. Name, address including suburb, contact number and email address.
2. If property/location has been inspected/visited for Myrtle Rust previously?
3. Situation eg nursery, residential, bushland
4. Host plant(s) including variety if possible. If unknown, a description of the plant.
5. Approximate number of plants or area (for bushland) affected (if known).
6. Any treatments or controls used.

Contacts

- I&I NSW – Exotic Plant Pest Hotline – 1800 084 881
- Local plant nurseries
- Forests NSW offices
- Department of Environment, Climate Change & Water - National Parks & Wildlife Services offices

Further reading

1. [I&I NSW Myrtle Rust website](#) which includes:
 - [Current situation update](#)
 - [Genera in the Myrtaceae family](#)
 - [Host list and images](#)
 - [Preventing spread of Myrtle Rust in bushland](#)
 - [Fungicide permit](#)
2. [National Park closures](#)

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