

How to remove infected myrtle plants and safely dispose of the waste

This document provides advice for landowners who choose to remove infected myrtle plants on their properties. Please note that **there is no requirement to remove infected plants**.

However, landowners with infected myrtles on their property have the choice to remove these plants if they choose. If you choose to remove your infected plant you can use the method on the following pages. Larger trees may need the assistance of an arborist. Infected myrtle plant material can be taken to local landfills as general waste, as long as the following process has been completed.

If you find myrtle rust for the first time and it hasn't previously been found in your region please call the **MPI Biosecurity Hotline (0800 80 99 66)**.

What you will need for removing plants

- Hairspray
- Large rubbish bags
- Disposable gloves
- Methylated spirits or bleach
- Change of clothes or overalls
- Secateurs and or saw
- Water
- Paper towels



Identification

Identify that the tree is in the Myrtle family. This can be done by using the myrtle rust reporter app, through the NZ Plant Conservation network or using MPI's Myrtle Rust ID Guide.

Common New Zealand myrtles include:

- Pōhutukawa
- Rātā
- Kānuka, Mānuka and tea tree
- Ramarama
- Lilly pilly
- Feijoa
- Willow myrtle
- Gum trees/Eucalyptus
- Bottle brush
- Guava



Identify that the infection is myrtle rust.

- **Don't touch it**
- If this is the first time you have seen what you think is myrtle rust call the MPI Exotic Pest and Disease Hotline immediately on 0800 80 99 66. The MPI Biosecurity Hotline can help you identify if it actually is myrtle rust. Many diseases or other natural causes look similar to myrtle rust, but often aren't it.
- If you have a camera or phone camera, take clear photos, including the whole plant, the whole affected leaf, and a close-up of the spores or affected area of the plant.

The process for removing an infected plant

<p>1. Put on gloves and an outer layer that you are able to wash after the removal of the plant.</p> <p>Overalls are a good option.</p>	
<p>2. Apply the Hairspray to the infected plant and allow it to dry – this may take 10-20 minutes.</p> <p>It is important to make sure that all the spores on the infected plant are well covered with hairspray. When the hairspray dries this will contain the spores on the leaves for removal.</p>	
<p>3. Cut the branches with secateurs or a saw to dismantle the whole plant bit by bit.</p> <p>If it is a really small plant, simply place the bag over the plant and either dig it out in one piece or cut the trunk to remove it.</p> <p>If you have a large tree and limited infection over the entire tree you could use this protocol to remove an infected branch all the way back to the trunk rather than removing the entire tree.</p>	

<p>4. Place the cuttings into a large black rubbish bag, ensuring that you can still seal the bag at the top.</p>	
<p>5. Tip 1 L of water into the bag and seal the bag tightly (this is approximately a jug of water or a large drink bottle full).</p>	
<p>6. Outer clothing or overalls should be taken off and placed into a bag. This can be taken home and washed normally in a hot or cold wash with detergent.</p>	
<p>7. Clean all equipment you have used: this can be done by wiping the equipment with methylated spirits. A 5% bleach concentration bath can also be used, equipment will need to be soaked for 20 minutes then rinsed and dried.</p> <p>If you do not have methylated spirits or bleach then wash equipment in water with detergent and leave to dry.</p>	

8. **Leave the bag for 3-4 weeks in a sunny spot** to kill any spores inside, turning the bag every week



9. **After 3-4 weeks** the plant material can be sent to the local landfill in the bag as general waste or buried on site in your garden.

Do not open the bag as it could contain bacteria that could be harmful to human health such as *Legionella* that causes legionnaires disease.

