



## Myrtle Rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*)

# Garden Retail and Landscape Guidance

Symptoms on pōhutukawa. Credit: Department of Conservation, Te Papa Atawhai.

NZPPI has a management system and protocols for the management of myrtle rust within nurseries. These protocols include procedures for surveys and plant protection so nurseries can confidently supply plants that are free from myrtle rust.

The protocols and the NZPPI Myrtle Rust Climate Model are available at [www.nzppi.co.nz/resources/disease-management/myrtlerust](http://www.nzppi.co.nz/resources/disease-management/myrtlerust)

## Managing Myrtle Species in Retail

### Staff Awareness

Share this document and photos on [myrtlerust.org.nz](http://myrtlerust.org.nz) with all staff to raise awareness of the disease. Talk about what to look for and what to do if they find anything suspicious.

### Plant Inspection Schedule

Periodically (weekly) survey Myrtaceae species on-site and along property boundaries, nearby roads etc. If you find myrtle rust in your retail store, isolate the infected plants and treat with one of the recommended fungicides or discard (see the Myrtle Rust Survey Protocol for advice).

### Preventative Fungicide Programme

Implement a fungicide treatment programme across all Myrtaceae plants you hold in stock (refer to the Myrtle Rust Prevention with Fungicides Protocol).

### Crop aggregation

Consolidate Myrtaceae plant species within defined areas to make it easier to inspect plants and treat with fungicides. But ensure adequate spacing between plants to avoid myrtle rust spread from infected stock to healthy.

### Customer information

There are some key messages on the next page to help staff prepare when dealing with questions on myrtle rust from customers.



Symptoms on rōhutu fruit.  
Credit: Department of Conservation, Te Papa Atawhai.

## What is Myrtle Rust?

Myrtle rust (*Austropuccinia psidii*) is a fungal species that specifically attacks many species in the myrtle family. It arrived in New Zealand in 2017, wind-blown from Australia. Myrtle rust is very sensitive to our seasonal weather variations. This makes it easier to control if we do the right thing at the right time under the right conditions.

## What species of myrtle are affected in New Zealand

The most commonly infected plants in New Zealand are the native taonga species ramarama (*Lophomyrtus bullata*), rōhutu (*Lophomyrtus obcordata*), pōhutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) and swamp maire (*Syzygium maire*).

The exotic species *Syzygium australe* (lilly pilly) is also severely affected. It is advisable not to sell or plant these species of New Zealand severely affected by myrtle rust.

## Vulnerability to myrtle rust of some New Zealand myrtles

Plant name (Botanical name)	Severe infection commonly seen	Common on young plants and basal shoots of older trees	When growing with more susceptible species	Infection seldom seen in the natural environment	Infection not confirmed in the natural environment
<b>Native myrtles</b>					
Ramarama ( <i>Lophomyrtus bullata</i> )	●				
Rōhutu ( <i>Lophomyrtus obcordata</i> )	●				
Maire tawake ( <i>Syzygium maire</i> )	●				
Pōhutukawa ( <i>Metrosideros excelsa</i> )		●			
Climbing rātā ( <i>Metrosideros</i> spp.)			●		
Mānuka ( <i>Leptospermum scoparium</i> )				●	
Kānuka ( <i>Kunzea robusta</i> )					●
Northern rātā ( <i>Metrosideros robusta</i> )					●
Southern rātā ( <i>Metrosideros umbellifera</i> )					●
<b>Exotic myrtles</b>					
Lilly pilly, Eugenia ( <i>Syzygium australe</i> )	●				
Guava ( <i>Psidium guajava</i> )	●				
Feijoa ( <i>Acca sellowiana</i> )				●	
Brush cherry ( <i>Syzygium paniculatum</i> )					●
Monkey apple ( <i>Syzygium smithii</i> )					●

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## Where is Myrtle Rust found?

Myrtle rust is mostly found in the North Island, especially in the Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki and Wellington regions. It is also present on the north and west coasts of the South Island and in 2020 was detected in a hedge in Christchurch.



## I think I have found it in my garden, what should I do?

First check if the affected plant is a myrtle species by visiting [myrtlerust.org.nz](http://myrtlerust.org.nz). If it is a myrtle species then:

- Report observations on [iNaturalist.nz](http://iNaturalist.nz) to help map the spread of the disease.
- Remove infected branches or plants. See advice below.
- Rethink buying or planting susceptible plants in areas where myrtle rust is prevalent. A list of alternatives is available on the Auckland Council website.

### Can I spray it with a fungicide?

Contact fungicides remain on the surface of plants but can be easily disintegrated by sunlight or washed off by rain or irrigation, so there is always a need to repeat applications to protect the vulnerable new growth (young leaves and shoot-tips). Few home garden chemicals are registered for rust diseases.

#### Those that are include:

- Myclobutanil – available as Yates Fungus Fighter.
- Azoxystrobin – available as Kiwicare Rose Force.

Follow the label for mixing rates. Use personal protective clothing, gloves and a mask when spraying. Apply to young new growth, leaves and growing tips to protect them. You may need to reapply every few weeks during the growing season.

### Should I remove infected plants from my garden?

If you have infected shrubs or trees on your property it is advisable to remove them to prevent infection of other plants.

The ideal time to cut down and remove affected shrubs and trees is during the winter months, when they are not producing any rust spores. Shrubs (up to 3m tall) can be cut down using a hand-saw but larger shrubs and trees may need professional arborists to bring them down safely.

If you want to remove plants while they are showing symptoms - ie during warmer months - we recommend the following:

- move affected plants on rainy days or hose down prior to removal to reduce spore activity. Avoid removing on windy days.
- Place cut branches or uprooted plants away from healthy plants and leave for a few weeks before composting, burying or taking to your local landfill station.
- If the plant material is freshly cut, use a closed-sided trailer to transport it to the landfill to prevent rust spores blowing around.
- For larger trees, a qualified arborist may be able to remove cut material from site.
- Wash any clothing which may have come into contact with viable rust spores and scrub shoes with hot water.

## I THINK I HAVE SEEN MYRTLE RUST IN MY COMMUNITY, WHAT SHOULD I DO?



Is the affected plant a myrtle species?  
Check on [myrtlerust.org.nz](http://myrtlerust.org.nz).



Take a photo and report it on  
[iNaturalist.nz](http://iNaturalist.nz).



Contact your local council and let  
them know.

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