

Resource for Gardeners

Know myrtle rust - and don't touch it!

Myrtle rust forms pustules of tiny yellow spores. These spores can stick to clothes, shoes and fingers and spread to other plants - so please don't touch it! In plants where the disease has progressed, pustules become white, then grey and infected plant material dies and turns brown/grey.

For more information on myrtle rust, please visit myrtlerust.org.nz or the Beyond Myrtle Rust website. If you suspect a plant is infected with myrtle rust, please take a photo and upload it to iNaturalistNZ.



Ramarama
Lophomyrtus bullata



Brush cherry
Syzygium australe



Röhutu
Lophomyrtus obcordata

Know your myrtles

Native myrtles include pōhutukawa, mānuka, kānuka, ramarama and rātā. Non-native myrtles include feijoa, eucalypts, bottlebrush, guavas, willow myrtle, lilly pilly and monkey apple. If you are unsure whether your plant is from the myrtle family, you can use the [NZ Myrtaceae key](#) to help identify it or upload a picture onto iNaturalistNZ for confirmation. You can also ask for more information on myrtles and myrtle rust at your local nursery or botanical garden. **Garden plants that are particularly susceptible to myrtle rust are *Syzygium* species (monkey apple and lilly pillys) and *Lophomyrtus*.** Here is a [list of myrtle species](#) that have been found with myrtle rust in New Zealand.

Prune myrtles in winter

Myrtle rust spores only infect new growth, including leaves, stems and flower buds. Since pruning stimulates new growth, it is best to time pruning for when the disease is least infectious - in the winter (June, July and August), not in summer.



Kānuka
Kunzea robusta



Lilly pilly
Syzygium smithii

Water myrtles on the ground in the morning

Myrtle rust thrives in humidity. To protect your myrtles, please water only in the mornings. Also, since myrtle rust attacks leaves, stems and buds, don't water leaves. Instead, water at the base of the plant. This also helps conserve water.

Remove and / or report infected plants

Since spores spread easily, please follow correct protocols to ensure plants are removed without spreading the infection, including sterilizing equipment. Watch this [video](#) and or check out this [manual](#) for safe removal of infected plants.

If you do not feel comfortable removing a plant or if it is too large to remove easily, please report the infection on [iNaturalistNZ](#). This will help researchers track the spread of infection, and which plants are infected.

Don't plant highly susceptible myrtles

So far in New Zealand, highly-susceptible myrtles are *Lophomyrtus* species (ramarama and rōhutu) and cultivars such as *Lophomyrtus x ralphii* 'Red dragon', lilly pilly or monkey apple (non-native *Syzygium* species) and willow myrtle (*Agonis flexuosa*) in the North Island. These susceptible plants act as vectors for myrtle rust, allowing the disease to build up in the environment. Talk to your local nursery about native alternatives for your garden. Also, consider removing and replacing susceptible myrtles currently present in your garden. They will be easier to remove when they are still healthy.

All resources:

- ▶ Report suspected myrtle rust infections on [iNaturalistNZ](#)
- ▶ Visit the [myrtlerust.org.nz](#) website for more information and [download their list](#) of plant species confirmed to be infected with myrtle rust
- ▶ Use the [NZ Myrtaceae key](#) to identify Myrtaceae species
- ▶ Learn more about the [Beyond Myrtle Rust](#) research programme
- ▶ Use this [video](#) and [manual](#) to learn how to safely remove infected plants

Plant identification:

- ▶ [Ramarama, *Lophomyrtus bullata*](#)
- ▶ [Rohutu, *Lophomyrtus obcordata*](#)

Photo Credits

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