

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 and myrtle rust identification, please visit the [NZPPI website](#) (download their fact sheet [here](#)) or myrtlerust.org.nz.



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 pillys and monkey apple. If you are unsure whether your plant is from the myrtle family, upload a picture onto [iNaturalistNZ](#) for expert confirmation, or try the seek app for a fast ID. You can ask for more information on myrtles and myrtle rust at your local nursery or botanical garden. **Not all myrtles are vulnerable to myrtle rust; only *Syzygium* species (monkey apple and lilly pillys) and *Lophomyrtus* have been badly infected in New Zealand gardens.** Myrtles recorded with myrtle rust in New Zealand can be found [here](#).

Prune myrtles in winter

Myrtle rust spores only infect new growth, including leaves, stems and flower buds. 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

Since myrtle rust thrives in humidity, restrict watering to 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 report infected plants

Since spores spread easily, it is important to follow correct protocols to ensure plants are removed without spreading the infection, including sterilizing equipment. Please report the infection on [iNaturalistNZ](#). This will help researchers track the spread of infection, and which plants are infected.

Watch [this video](#) or check out this [guide](#) for safe removal of infected plants.

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 can form a "reservoir" population in which the infection can build up. Talk to your local nursery about native alternatives for your garden or visit the [Auckland Council website](#). Also, consider removing and replacing susceptible myrtles currently present in North Island gardens. They are easier to remove when they are still healthy rather than after they have become infected.

All resources:

- ▶ Report suspected myrtle rust infections on [iNaturalistNZ](#)
- ▶ Visit the [myrtlerust.org.nz](#) website for more information or [download their plant list](#) of species confirmed to be infected with myrtle rust
- ▶ Learn more about the [Beyond Myrtle Rust Programme](#) here
- ▶ The [NZPPI website](#) has more information and a [fact sheet](#) on myrtle rust
- ▶ Use this [video](#) and [manual](#) to learn how to safely remove infected plants
- ▶ Use the [Auckland Council guide](#) to reduce myrtle rust using plant selection

Plant identification:

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

Photo Credits

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