

2019 Myrtle Rust Science Symposium

Convenor and Speaker bios

We will continue to update this page so check back regularly to find out more about the great speaker line-up at the 2019 Symposium.



Emma Bodley

Emma has been the Botanical Records and Conservation Specialist at Auckland Botanic Gardens for the last five and a half years. She has been involved with the myrtle rust response from the day it arrived in New Zealand. She was trained in myrtle rust surveillance in Taranaki and since then has been involved in decisions regarding threatened species conservation, seed banking, revegetation and day to day management of infected plants.



David Chagné

David is a Science Group Leader at Plant & Food Research. His group's research focuses on the application of molecular genetics and genomics to explain the genetic control of important characters in plants, pathogens and animals. David has co-led the sequencing of the mānuka and myrtle rust genomes, and catalogued DNA variations in the mānuka genome across the motu in collaboration with Māori stakeholders in the honey industry and Landcare Research - Manaaki Whenua.

He is a project leader in the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment SSIF (Strategic Science & Investment Fund) platform Genomics Aotearoa.



Heidi Dungey

Heidi specialises in tree breeding and genetic resource characterisation for forestry species including but not exclusive to radiata pine, Douglas-fir, cypresses, eucalypts and redwoods. Her research encompasses quantitative and ecological genetics and breeding, including the application of new technologies in tree breeding programmes and propagation research. As leader of Scion’s Forest Genetics research programme, Heidi works closely with New Zealand seed producers, forest growers, iwi and government departments to develop/co-develop tangible research pathways and outcomes.



Ken Hughey

Ken is the Chair of the Myrtle Rust Strategic Science Advisory Group. He is also a member of the Kauri Dieback SSAG. Since 2014, Ken has been on a three-day per week secondment from Lincoln University to the Department of Conservation (DOC) as Chief Science Advisor. In this role, Ken takes a broad overview of science issues relating to DOC’s responsibilities and advises the department’s Director-General about preferred ways forward.



Grant Pearse

Grant Pearse is a researcher at Scion Research in Rotorua. His research experience includes applications of remote sensing for forest mensuration, forest health and emerging technologies such as UAVs. He has experience with a range of remote sensing technologies including lidar, hyperspectral and multispectral sensors. Recently, Grant’s research has focused on exploring applications of data science approaches such as deep learning to remotely sensed data.



Melanie Mark-Shadbolt

Mel is the Director Māori, New Zealand’s Biological Heritage Ngā Koiora Tuku Iko. She works on strategic priorities and building strategic links with Māori and indigenous researchers, groups and entities and helps to develop and embed the principles of Vision Mātauranga into the Challenge. Mel is also the Ministry for the Environment’s Kaihautu Chief Māori Advisor, and Chief Executive of Te Tira Whakamātaki.



Grant Smith

Grant is a Principal Scientist/Program Leader at Plant and Food Research where he is leading several myrtle rust research projects, including the MBIE-Catalyst *Myrtle Rust: a significant threat to Australasia and the Pacific* programme; and *Novel mitigation technologies* in the MBIE-Endeavour Program, *Beyond Myrtle Rust: Towards Ecosystem Resilience*.

The plant resistance information and the pathogen genome form the basis of research that has been initiated in *Beyond Myrtle Rust* to understand how this pathogen causes disease in mānuka and ultimately develop novel control options to target this disease process.



Mahajabeen Padamsee

Mahajabeen is a Research Mycologist at Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, and the Programme Leader for [Beyond Myrtle Rust](#). After moving to Manaaki Whenua to undertake post-doctoral research on New Zealand’s rust species, Mahajabeen’s interests expanded to include investigating interactions between the pathogen which causes kauri dieback, and fungi in New Zealand’s native forests.



Bec Stanley

Bec is the curator of the Auckland Botanic Gardens and is presenting at the symposium in her role as the New Zealand convener of Botanic Gardens Australia NZ, the network which represents the interests of botanic gardens in Australia and New Zealand. Bec is a botanist specialising in threatened plant management and biosecurity. She is committed to strengthening the role botanic and public gardens as well as the amenity horticulture sector in research and conservation in Australasia.



Peri Tobias

Peri is a researcher and academic based at the University of Sydney. She has worked in horticulture, arboriculture and environmental management at local government level, predominantly managing threatened species and biodiversity. Her research since 2011 has focused on the fungal pathogen that causes myrtle rust. Her PhD thesis investigated resistance in an Australian host plant, the lilly pilly.

Since 2017, Peri has worked closely with New Zealand researchers to understand the genetics of the myrtle rust



pathogen, building a strong collaboration between Australia and New Zealand to tackle this invasive fungal pathogen.

Nick Waipara

Nick is a member of the Myrtle Rust Strategic Science Advisory Group and the Kauri Dieback SSAG. He is also part of the Strategic Leadership Team at the Biological Heritage Science Challenge Ngā Koiora Tuku Iho, providing advice and facilitating Vision Mātauranga principles and concepts, Māori research priorities and methodologies. He also leads Plant & Food Research’s Epidemiology and Disease Management team.



John Walsh

John Walsh is Director Communications, Engagement and Channels at the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). Through that role he has had significant involvement with myrtle rust since its detection in mainland New Zealand in 2017. John sat on the Myrtle Rust Response Governance Group and more latterly has been chair of the Myrtle Rust Long Term Management Group. In his role John has been involved in a range of other biosecurity responses and issues, including leading the development of the [Ko Tatou – This is Us](#) programme aimed at engaging all New Zealanders in biosecurity.



Katrin Webb

Katrin has recently started with the Department of Conservation as the Principal Advisor, Science Investment – Threats, which covers myrtle rust amongst others. Before this, she spent her science and working career at Scion. Katrin has been involved with Myrtle Rust since New Zealand went into preparedness through involvement in Scion’s Forest Health Lab Diagnostics service and was the Programme lead of MPI’s Research programme - Building engagement and social licence, Improving Management tools and approaches and Evaluation of Impacts and Responses.

