

Taking action on essential infrastructure

The need for well-resourced seedbank facilities and an accessible data system were the focus of two workshops at the recent Myrtle Rust Science Symposium.

The Myrtle Rust Science Plan highlights both as essential infrastructure required to safeguard New Zealand's myrtles and support the research priorities identified in the plan.

Good progress was made on both issues, says Myrtle Rust Strategic Science Advisory Group Chair Ken Hughey, including identifying what we have, what we need, and how to close the gap.

Seedbank network urgently needed

The two recurring messages from this workshop were that we need a seedbank for indigenous species, and that the current seedbank (housed at the Margot Forde Germplasm Centre) is inadequate and potentially puts New Zealand's myrtles at risk.

The workshop recommended a distributed network, with a few well-managed collections across New Zealand with strong protocols for engaging with iwi and for ensuring appropriate and approved use. This will join up current capabilities, expertise, skills and resources. The distributed network needs a full-time director, and a governance group that includes the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment and the Department of Conservation.

The SSAG is now considering how to support a business case for the development of a New Zealand Inc. seedbank network that will meet our collective needs.

Creating a robust and reliable data system

Currently a lot of myrtle rust-related data of varying quality is held by the Ministry for Primary Industries, the Department of Conservation and iNaturalist, as well as within Crown Research Institutes and research organisations.

It was recommended that a data system be developed to provide a single source of leadership and oversight. This workshop provided material that can be used to develop guiding principles for data collection, storage, usage and governance.

The SSSAG is considering how to progress this.

In progress

Myrtle rust science hub

All the MPI-funded research is being published on the myrtle rust website www.myrtlerust.org.nz. Links to other myrtle rust work will also be included here.

Science map – what's been done and the gaps

The Biological Heritage Challenge is working on a science stocktake that will be maintained as a living document and available online. This includes mapping the current science efforts and the completed MPI-funded research against the [Myrtle Rust Science Plan](#) (what has been done, what is being continued, and where are the gaps?).

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