



September 2015

Myrtle rust

This is part one of a two part article about the serious plant disease [myrtle rust](#).

Myrtle rust is a disease caused by the fungus *Puccinia psidii*, initially identified as *Uredo rangellii*, which affects trees and bushes in the Myrtaceae family. Approximately 300 native species are currently known to be susceptible including *Eucalyptus* (74 species), *Syzygium* (55), *Melaleuca* (31) and *Leptospermum* (26).

First detected in Australia in 2010, myrtle rust has become established along the eastern coast. In February this year it was detected in Tasmania and in July it was found on the Tiwi Islands off Darwin, Northern Territory. Myrtle rust is not present in WA. Your help is needed to protect our natural environment and associated tourism, timber plantations, apiculture (beekeeping) and nursery industries, all of which would be heavily impacted if myrtle rust were to establish.

Myrtle rust produces bright yellow to orange clumps of powdery spores or pustules on foliage and twigs. Left untreated the disease can cause deformed leaves, heavy defoliation of branches, stunted growth, dieback and plant death. The tiny spores are highly transportable by wind, infected plant material, insect/animal movement and also via contaminated clothing, hair, skin and personal items.

So far, eradication efforts in the eastern states have been unsuccessful at stopping the disease spreading from commercial and private properties into native bushland.

If you suspect that you have seen myrtle rust on any trees or shrubs do not disturb the plant. Any disturbance could dislodge spores and accelerate local spread of the disease. Take a clear photo of the diseased plant and email it to info@agric.wa.gov.au with location and contact information, or call the Pest and Disease Information Service on 1800 084 881 for assistance.

Next month's Backyard Buddies will look at myrtle rust management and how we can all help prevent it entering our state.



Myrtle rust spores on *Rhodamnia* leaves.



Myrtle rust spores on *Rhodamnia* species.



Myrtle Rust on broad-leaved paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*)

Photo: © I&I NSW

So far myrtle rust has not been found in WA however with the detection of the disease in [Tasmania](#) and the [Tiwi Islands of the Northern Territory](#) this year, it is not far from our border. Restrictions for the importation of host plant material including cut flowers, nursery stock, foliage, seed, fruit, tissue cultures and dry plant material from the Myrtaceae plant family are in place as the Department of Agriculture and Food WA works with industry and other agencies to minimise the risk of myrtle rust entering the state.

Home gardeners, bush walkers and travellers are likely to be the first people to detect myrtle rust, but are also those most likely to inadvertently introduce the disease into WA. As such, precautions need to be taken by everyone to avoid bringing the highly transportable myrtle rust spores into our state.

If travelling by road shake out floor mats, wash down tyres and check that the vehicle, caravan, trailer and any gardening equipment are free of plant material and soil before leaving each state and entering WA. If possible, change into fresh clothing and footwear before entering WA and pack away the attire that was worn in other states or territories. When possible, wash everything that was used on the trip. Rail and airline passengers should not bring plant material into WA before checking with Quarantine WA. All plant material, including fresh fruit and vegetables, is subject to import conditions. If friends or relatives from other states are planning to visit WA please pass on this advice.

The biggest request is for everyone to remain vigilant.



Myrtle Rust on *Agonis flexuosa* cv. Afterdark
Photo: Dr Angus Carnegie © I&I NSW

Chemicals which can control the disease are available, however this is probably not a viable option for large scale landscapes. If you suspect that you have seen myrtle rust on any trees or shrubs do not disturb the plant because any disturbance could dislodge spores and accelerate local spread of the disease.

Take a clear photo of the suspected plant and disease and email it to info@agric.wa.gov.au or call the [Pest and Disease Information Service](#) on 1800 084 881 for assistance. For importing requirements, [Quarantine WA](#) can be contacted on (08) 9334 1800.

For more images of Myrtle rust, visit the [NSW DPI Myrtle rust image gallery](#).