

MYRTLE RUST

(*Puccinia Psidii*)

Following the April discovery of Myrtle Rust, we sent out a Bulletin with information as we saw it then.

We observed then that the discovery of Myrtle Rust was of grave concern to the NZ native and exotic tree community.

In Australia since 2010 (it is also known as Eucalypt or Guava Rust), it has been causing accelerated tree deaths at high rates in some species.

NZ native Myrtle species take in all our *Metrosideros*, including Pohutukawa, Rata, the rare Bartlett's Rata, and various hybrids and crosses such as Mistral. It also includes other vital species such as Kanuka and Manuka (*Leptospermum*) as well as Ramarama and Maire tawhake (*Syzygium maire*), and the exotics, Feijoa and Guava.

Myrtle Rust is wind-borne, and contagious, and MPI is pretty clear it has blown across the Tasman this year. It manifests as a yellow spotted fungus on the foliage of affected trees.

We now know that —

- It has been found in 4 Locations — Kerikeri (4 sites), Taranaki (68 sites), Bay of Plenty (28 sites - mainly Te Puke), and Waikato (2).
- An area in Taranaki has been 'quarantined' with restrictions on plant movements in and out.
- Rust has primarily been found on private property (89 sites), as well as in 8 nurseries, 3 public places, and 2 commercial sites.
- The most vulnerable species are interesting - most have been found on Ramarama (*Lophomyrtus bullata*) (59), *Metrosideros* (39), one on Manuka. Three Monkey Apple have been infected, plus 2 Bottle Brush, and one Eucalyptus.

Commercial nurseries such as Takana have found using several fungicides regularly and properly is effective in controlling it.



All Plant Producers remain on high alert, checking stock daily.

Myrtle Rust is said to develop more in warm humid conditions, so we could see further appearances over the summer months. Whether we can ever expect the country to be rid of it is an open question.

It seems at this stage, thankfully, that it has not spread widely throughout our native bush areas around NZ.

Sales of Takana Pohutukawas, Kanuka, Rata and Maire Tawhake have begun to rise again after the initial predictable drop-off as confidence in our clean properties and stock returns. These tree species are still amongst the most beautiful and popular natives New Zealand has to offer. Purchase our clean, healthy stock and plant with these iconic species as part of your landscape-enhancing developments. We need to be vigilant for Myrtle Rust but ignoring these species in environmental enhancement plans has the same effect as having Myrtle Rust wipe them out. Plant at least some of these species to ensure their survival and to reinforce your dedication to New Zealand's native flora.

Our stock is guaranteed healthy and we maintain vigilance.