



# Myrtle rust

Myrtle rust is a serious fungal disease that affects plants in the Myrtaceae family. This family includes Australian natives such as rose apple (lilly pilly), bottle brush and tea tree.

Myrtle rust also affects many plants that are commonly found in gardens. These include:

- willow myrtle
- thready-bark myrtle
- scrub cherry
- lemon scented myrtle.

Myrtle rust cannot be eradicated and will continue to spread in Queensland as it produces large numbers of spores that are easily spread by wind, human activity and animals. However, to determine how far it has spread and to learn more about the disease Biosecurity Queensland needs to know if you think you have seen myrtle rust. Call 13 25 23 or visit [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) to report any suspect sightings.

## What does myrtle rust look like?

Myrtle rust attacks young, soft, actively growing leaves, shoot tips and young stems. It also attacks fruit and flowers of susceptible plants.

The first signs of rust infection are tiny, raised spots or pustules. After a few days, the pustules turn a distinctive egg-yolk yellow colour.

Some plant species such as frangipanis, hibiscus and palm trees may display symptoms that look like myrtle rust; however, because these plants are not in the Myrtaceae family, they do not have myrtle rust.

## How does myrtle rust spread?

Myrtle rust can spread rapidly because it produces large numbers of spores that can be dispersed over long distances by wind. The disease can also spread through the movement of:

- infected or contaminated plant material, nursery stock, plant cuttings, flowers and germ plasm
- animals such as bees, birds, bats and possums that have been in contact with rust spores
- contaminated plant waste, timber, wood packaging and dunnage
- contaminated equipment and tools used on or around plants (e.g. chainsaws, secateurs)
- contaminated clothing, shoes and other personal effects.

Myrtle rust is likely to infect plants in wet and humid conditions and rust pustules can mature to release spores in as little as 10–12 days. Spores can survive for up to three months in the environment.

## Can I move my plants?

### Moving plants within Queensland

If you are trading or selling plants within Queensland, you must ensure that you do not have any plants that you know are, or suspect could be, infected with myrtle rust.

Penalties apply to individuals and businesses that sell, or possess for sale, plants infected with myrtle rust.

People moving myrtaceous plants or plant material are encouraged to check that the plants are free from myrtle rust before moving them. Where possible, avoid moving host plants from known infected areas to areas where the disease is not yet established.

### Moving plants interstate from Queensland

There are conditions for the movement of myrtaceous nursery stock from Queensland to South Australia, Victoria and the Northern Territory. Visit the Biosecurity Queensland website for an outline of these conditions.

There are no conditions for myrtle rust entry from Queensland to New South Wales.

### Bringing plants into Queensland

Plants being sent to Queensland from another state or territory do not need to be accompanied by a Plant Health Certificate or be inspected by an accredited person prior to despatch.

However, you should ensure that any plants being sent to Queensland from another state where myrtle rust has been detected are not infected, or suspected to be infected, with myrtle rust.

## What do I do if I see myrtle rust?

If you suspect you have seen myrtle rust call Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au) Reporting the disease can help Biosecurity Queensland track how far it has spread and which plants it is affecting.

The more that is known about the disease, the more we can learn about how to manage it and its potential impact.



There are a number of options available for managing myrtle rust-infected plants on your property:

- spraying with fungicide
- removing and disposing of diseased plants
- removing and disposing of healthy plants as a preventative measure
- taking no action.

The option that you select should be appropriate to your specific situation.

**For further information** on these options contact Biosecurity Queensland by calling 13 25 23 or visiting [www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au).



**Myrtle rust on rose apple (*Syzygium jambos*) foliage**

Myrtle rust typically attacks new growth. Note the bright yellow spores and purplish-red lesions on the stems and leaves of the rose apple's new flush.



**Myrtle rust infection on broad-leaved paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) foliage**

Purplish-red lesions and curled up leaf tips are typical of late-onset myrtle rust symptoms, as shown on this broad-leaved paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*) tree. As the disease progresses, the bright yellow spores change to light grey spots.

