

Myrtle rust found in South East Queensland

A DERM Alert

In late December 2010, Myrtle rust was found in a small number of production and retail nurseries in South East Queensland. Myrtle rust is a serious fungal disease caused by *Uredo rangellii* that affects plants in the Myrtaceae family. This family includes many Australian native species including eucalypts, bloodwoods, paperparks, tea trees, lilly pillies and water gums. The disease can cause deformation of leaves, heavy defoliation of branches, dieback, stunted growth and plant death.

Myrtle rust is a reportable plant disease under Queensland legislation. In addition to the potential impact on biodiversity, the disease has the potential to affect a number of Queensland industries including the cut flower, nursery, garden, forestry and bee industries. The rust poses no threat to human health.

Myrtle rust was first detected in Australia in April 2010 at a cut flower nursery in New South Wales and has now been confirmed on 140 properties from the mid south coast to the north coast of NSW. The rust has been confirmed in 25 bushland sites and adjoining residential properties with several large tracts of bushland infected on the NSW Central Coast.

Biosecurity Queensland is lead agency in working with industry to investigate the origin of the infected plants in Queensland and the current location of any plants that have been sold to the public. DERM are represented on the Queensland Myrtle Rust Control Group and have a committed interest in preventing the spread of this disease.

A series of printable information sheets that provide a good overview on Myrtle rust and images to help identify the disease have been published on our Intranet. They are:

- [Myrtle rust - have you seen this plant disease?](#)
- [Myrtle Rust Fact Sheet .pdf](#)
- [Myrtle Rust Poster .pdf](#)

Please ensure that this information is distributed broadly to DERM staff that may not have access to this email and prominently displayed within DERM workplaces so that staff who regularly work in the field are aware of the disease. DERM staff that visit native forests or nurseries as part of their normal duties should be alert and observant for symptoms of the disease.

If you think you have seen Myrtle rust on vegetation please do not move any part of the plant as this may spread spores. We ask that you take photos of the top and underside of the affected leaves and send these to corrooerqpwsterres@derm.qld.gov.au with your name, position title, contact details and the location (with GPS reference if possible) of where the plant is located. DERM officers will then liaise with Biosecurity Queensland to investigate the potential infection.

A training package to assist DERM staff with identification of this disease in bushland environments is presently being developed in liaison with Biosecurity Queensland. Further information in relation to this training will be provided in the near future.

For more information on Myrtle rust please visit www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au (view *Plant health, pests and diseases*) or call 13 25 23. Reporting is essential to enable Biosecurity Queensland to keep track of the spread of infection and update the known host list.