

Treating myrtle rust on your property

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

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.

If you have myrtle rust-infected plants on your property, or are at risk of getting myrtle rust on your property, there are several strategies you can implement to limit the spread of the disease.

Treating plants infected by myrtle rust

If myrtle rust becomes established on your property, there are several strategies you can use to limit the spread of the disease and help protect your garden plants. The strategy you select should be appropriate to your specific situation. This can include:

- spraying with fungicide
- removing and disposing of diseased plants
- removing and disposing of healthy plants as a preventative measure.

You could combine one or more of these strategies to effectively control myrtle rust on your property.

Spraying with fungicide

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has issued the following permits for certain fungicides to be used to control myrtle rust on plants and plant-related materials:

- [For the control of myrtle rust in ornamentals and non-fruit bearing plants of the myrtaceae family in home gardens \(PER12828\) \(PDF, 28 kB\)](#)
- [For the treatment of nursery stock \(non-food\), ornamentals, non-bearing fruit trees and cut flowers/foilage for myrtle rust \(PER12156\) \(PDF, 52 kB\)](#)
- [For the decontamination of vehicles, tools and equipment that has come into contact with myrtle rust infected material \(PER10535\) \(PDF 18 kB\)](#)

Visit the [APVMA website](#) for more information about these permits.

Before using the fungicides, read the permit in conjunction with the product label to determine the relevant directions for use, rate of application and critical use instructions that may apply.

When you use fungicides, it is important to rotate them to maintain their usefulness. Contact your local nursery, garden centre or agricultural chemical supplier for information on the range of chemicals that are suitable for use in any individual situation.

Removing and disposing of diseased plants

Removal

To minimise the potential spread of spores, spray infected plants with an approved fungicide the day before you intend to remove the plant. If it is not possible to treat with a fungicide, carefully wet the plant foliage to dampen any spores that are likely to be dispersed during the removal process.

The method of plant removal will depend on the size and number of plants:

- small plants can be enclosed in a plastic bag to reduce spore dispersal before being pulled or dug out of the ground. For potted plants, the whole plant, including the pot, should be placed into the bag and sealed
- large plants can be cut into smaller pieces, wrapped in black plastic and placed in the sun for 3-4 weeks (a process called solarisation). Alternatively, plant parts can be placed in plastic bags and sealed for offsite disposal.

Disposal

Dispose of infected plants (or plant parts) by implementing any of these options:

- burying on-site
- placing in general domestic waste bins or transporting in a covered vehicle/trailer to a council general waste disposal site (not green waste)
- securely covering and sealing the entire plant within black plastic (or similar) and placing in direct sunlight for 3-4 weeks (a process called solarisation).

We do not recommend that you use infected plants as mulch, as this distributes infected plant material and may spread myrtle rust.

Removing and disposing of healthy plants as a preventative measure

Some species of plants are known to be highly susceptible to and severely affected by myrtle rust. You can remove these species prior to infection to reduce the risk of a significant infection developing on your property. Find out more about [known host plants](#) and other susceptible species.

You can dispose of healthy plants that show no signs of myrtle rust infection as normal garden waste. If you are unsure whether plants are infected with myrtle rust, dispose of them using the methods outlined for removing diseased plants.

Replanting

If you have removed infected myrtaceous plants, replanting with similar species may cause the disease to re-occur. Select replacement plants that are unlikely to become infected. Contact your local nursery for advice on other suitable plant types for your garden.

Take time to observe what is happening in your garden to determine which plants are less susceptible to the disease. This can help guide your future planting choices.

How to Stop the Spread

Although myrtle rust spreads easily, there are simple steps you can take to help slow this spread.

1. Buy healthy plants: Make sure myrtaceous plants bought for your garden are free from the symptoms of myrtle rust. Inspect the foliage and stems before you buy them, and avoid purchasing plants that have signs of disease.
2. Clean equipment: Clean gardening tools and gloves with detergent and water after use or disinfectant, especially if you have used the tools on another property. Wipe down electrical items [mobiles, GPS] with disinfectant cloth or use them in a plastic bag and dispose of plastic bag before moving onto another property.
3. Clean your clothes: If you have been to a nursery, park, bushland area or another garden, change your clothes/hat before going into your own garden and wash these clothes before wearing them again to avoid transfer of myrtle rust spores to your garden.
4. Inspect regularly: Regularly inspect myrtaceous plants in your garden for signs of myrtle rust. Early detection will give you time to consider options for myrtle rust control on your property.
5. Monitor your plants: If myrtle rust does establish on your property, monitor your plants regularly. Note which plants become the most severely affected and consider not replanting with these species.

Hygiene

After removing and disposing of infected plants, wash clothing and clean any equipment with water and detergent or a [registered chemical](#) before starting other activities that may infect further plants.

You can reuse pots, wooden stakes and other items that have been in contact with an infected plant. However, you should thoroughly scrub these items with detergent and water, and leave them to dry completely, before reusing them.

Implementing good hygiene and decontamination practices will also aid in the control of myrtle rust.

Reporting

If you suspect that myrtle rust may be in other locations off your property, notify Biosecurity Queensland on

13 25 23 or by filling out the [online reporting form](#)