

## Myrtle Rust Update

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So Myrtle Rust has been found in Victoria.

What does that mean for the landscape industry?

Myrtle rust is a fungal infection that affects plants in the *Myrtaceae* family. This family includes species such as *Eucalyptus*, *Corymbia*, *Callistemon*, *Melaleuca*, *Syzygium*, *Agonis*, *Waterhousea*, and *Lophomyrtus* just to name a few. Understandably this list warrants concern for Australian flora. Myrtle Rust was first found two years ago on the Central Coast of NSW and then later in Queensland. Victoria is now the third state to detect the infection.

In Victoria, Myrtle Rust was first identified in a Bunnings store on the Mornington Peninsula, as was quickly followed by three wholesale nurseries and a number of the trade markets around Melbourne. All these businesses have subsequently been treated and are open for business again as normal.

While the long term result of the infection is unknown, as an industry we are well into developing and installing procedures to monitor and treat should further outbreaks occur. The plan for nursery businesses is to be vigilant but not over-reactive to the point of scaling back production of these iconic plants. Nor should landscapers worry about this scare at this point. Probably the best course of action here is to get regular updates from your nursery supplier or production nursery and discuss any concerns you have with accredited nursery personnel.

Myrtle rust spores seem not to perform at temperatures below 15 degrees so this may work to our advantage in Victoria. It may just be a case of monitoring during the summer and autumn months rather than having to change the species we currently produce and install in the landscape. However within areas such as East Gippsland and the Otway Ranges this may be a different story and require a different approach.

The Nursery Industry is running a series of courses on the recognition and control of Myrtle Rust. It is currently law that if recognised or suspected to be in an area it must be reported to the Department of Primary Industries. This requirement will continue for the foreseeable future. For more information on the disease it is advisable to take a look at the Department's website at <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/forestry/pests-diseases-weeds/diseases/myrtle-rust/what-does-myrtle-rust-look-like>.

So what should the Landscapers in Victoria be doing at the moment? Plenty, be aware that this is out there and has the potential to have a serious impact on our industry and our environment. Also be aware of the symptoms and get some advice if you think that you have seen the infection in stock or in gardens you are working on. The Department of Primary Industries are very helpful and just a phone call away if there is anything of concern.

Make sure to inspect all stock that you are buying for disease symptoms and again, if you have any concerns raise them with your supplier. Reputable nurseries recognised with NIASA (Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia) accreditation have by practice strict procedures for the inspection of stock and regular monitoring of pests and disease. It is recommended that you buy from businesses that display this accreditation as standard.

For regular updates, please visit our website at <http://www.specialitytrees.com.au/blog>.

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