

LOOK OUT FOR

Eucalyptus (guava) rust



Above: Eucalyptus rust causing light coloured dead spots on eucalypt leaves.

What is it?

Eucalyptus rust, also known as guava rust (*Puccinia psidii*), is a fungal disease of plants belonging to the family Myrtaceae, and is exotic to Australia.

The rust is considered to be one of the most serious threats to Australia's eucalypt production forests and natural ecosystems, which predominantly consist of plants in the family Myrtaceae.

The Myrtaceae is a large family which includes eucalypts, paper barks (melaleucas), bottle brushes (callistemons), lilly pillies (syzygiums) and a range of other important Australian genera.

If the rust becomes established in Australia, it is likely to have a significant impact on managed plantations, native forests and urban flora with indirect impacts on native fauna and human lifestyles.

Where is it?

Eucalyptus rust is established in Central and South America, the Caribbean, South Florida and the Hawaiian Islands. Eucalyptus rust is not known to be present in Australia.

Symptoms

Eucalyptus rust is the only known rust that occurs on eucalypts, so any suspicious symptoms should be checked and reported immediately.

Eucalyptus rust primarily attacks young (juvenile) leaves and also the flowers, shoots and fruits of a number of tree species. First signs of rust infection are tiny raised spots or pustules on infected tissue. After a few days pustules turn a distinctive egg-yolk yellow colour.

Infected leaves become deformed and eventually shrivel. Severe infection can cause heavy defoliation and stunt growth. Recurrent infections can lead to death of trees or shrubs.



Above: Dried and shrivelled leaves following severe infection by eucalyptus rust.



Above: Eucalyptus rust causing stem lesions.



Above: Deformed leaves on young growth - a result of rust infection.

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Spread

Eucalyptus rust spores are very small and can remain viable for months. The disease can spread from country to country through the movement of:

- infected plant material such as seeds, nursery stock and germplasm
- spores on timber, wood packaging and dunnage
- people carrying spores on clothing, shoes, equipment and other personal effects
- contaminated freight containers, and
- wind-borne spores.

Strategies

Australia is undertaking a number of activities to prevent eucalyptus rust from entering and establishing in the country. These activities relate to:

- quarantine measures and import conditions
- analysis of the pathways through which the rust could enter Australia
- surveillance for early detection of rust outbreaks
- industry biosecurity and response planning
- capacity building in Southeast Asia, and
- public awareness.

Technical experts agree that early detection of the rust before it enters Australia's forests is the best way to maximise the chances of eradicating the disease should it reach the country.

Be vigilant for signs of rust and report suspect symptoms immediately by calling the national free call (except for calls from mobiles) hotline on telephone 1800 084 881.

Photographs

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Report suspect detections to your local department of agriculture or primary industry, call the

EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE
1800 084 881

For more information:
www.daff.gov.au/plantpesthotline

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