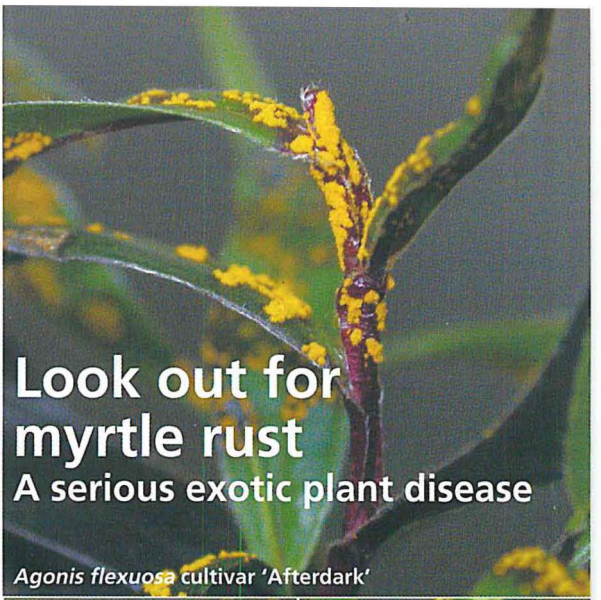
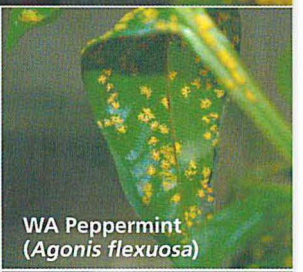


Look out for myrtle rust

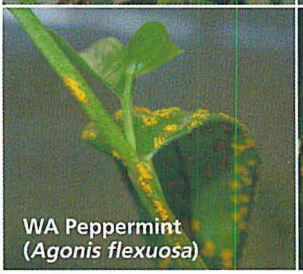
A serious exotic plant disease

Agonis flexuosa cultivar 'Afterdark'

Agonis flexuosa cultivar 'Afterdark'



WA Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*)



WA Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*)

WA Peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*)

Photos: Dr Loiuse Morin © CSIRO

Please note that myrtle rust has not yet been found in the field on accessions/cultivars of *Agonis flexuosa* other than cultivars 'afterdark' and 'burgundy'. These photos were taken following an inoculation in a controlled environment.

Department of
Environment and Conservation

20120201-06-5M

What is myrtle rust?

The fungus *Puccinia psidii* (myrtle rust) was first detected on the central coast of New South Wales in April 2010 and has since been found on numerous properties, including natural bush land, and more recently in Queensland and Victoria. Myrtle rust is part of a group of rust fungi collectively known as eucalyptus/guava rust. Myrtle rust poses a significant threat to the economy and biodiversity of Western Australia (WA). There are no confirmed reports of myrtle rust in WA. Early identification of this rust is vital to eradication efforts.

What plants can be affected?

Myrtle rust has the potential to impact all plants in the family Myrtaceae. In NSW, myrtle rust has been detected on *Agonis flexuosa* (WA peppermint) cultivars 'afterdark' and 'burgundy' and on other plants of which the following genera occur naturally in WA: *Agonis; Tristania; Callistemon; Leptospermum; Syzygium* and *Melaleuca*. Myrtle rust may also have the potential to impact WA eucalypts.

What does myrtle rust look like?

Myrtle rust produces lesions on young, actively growing leaves and shoots, as well as on fruits and sepals. Leaves may become buckled or twisted as a result of infection. Plants affected by the fungus exhibit rust lesions which are purple in colour with masses of bright yellow or orange-yellow spores. Occasionally, they may have dark brown spores. Severe rust disease in young trees may kill shoot tips, causing loss of leaders and a bushy habit.

How is it spread?

Rusts are highly transportable. The most common dispersal mechanism is via wind but they may also attract bees who work the spores on leaves. The spores can also be spread via contaminated clothing, infected plant material, insect movement and goods and equipment.

If you see any signs of myrtle rust:

- don't spread the spores by picking or moving suspect plants
- take photos, not leaf samples
- immediately notify the local Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) district manager, DEC's invasive plants coordinator on 9334 0312 or contact the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline: 1800 084 881.

More information on myrtle rust can be found at: www.agric.wa.gov.au-plant health/pest alert/myrtle rust.