

ALERT

Castor Oil Rust



Rust pustules on underside of leaf
Photo P. Hussey

During late spring, it was noticed that Castor Oil (*Ricinus communis*) bushes in Perth were going rusty. Bright orange pustules appeared on the back of the leaves, which eventually died and fell off. At about the same time it was also noted in Queensland and NSW.

The rust is *Melampsora ricini*, and is native to Castor Oil. Apparently it doesn't attack other plants in the same family. It is not known how or when it reached Australia. Perhaps it blew in on the cyclones earlier in the year? It seems to be having a severe effect on the bushes in Perth, so may have value as a bio-control agent. However, it is having very little effect at Carnarvon, and doesn't seem to have reached Merredin.

If you know of any populations of this weed in your area, have a look for this rust and please inform your LFW Officer if you find any.

