

# Blueberry Rust (*Thekopsora minima* P.Syd & Syd)

## What is blueberry rust?

Blueberry rust (*Thekopsora minima*) is a serious disease of blueberries that causes extensive defoliation on plants with severe infections. It is a threat to the Tasmanian blueberry industry and is currently subject to Tasmanian biosecurity regulation as a notifiable plant pest. This means that anyone who sees what they think might be blueberry rust must report it.

Blueberry rust affects blueberries, cranberries, huckleberries as well as a few other host plants. Blueberry rust poses no threat to human health.

## What to look for:

- Initial small yellow, chlorotic leaf spots on upper surface of young leaves
- Lesions turn rust/brown coloured and enlarge as the infection progresses (Fig 1. And 2.)
- Yellow-orange powdery pustules develop on the underside of leaves (Fig 3.)
- Similar pustules may also appear on blueberry fruit (see page 2.)
- Premature leaf drop and defoliation

## When do symptoms first appear?

In the field, the symptoms appear on leaves by mid-season at any growth stage of plants and on fruits by late season.

## How does Blueberry rust spread?

The disease spreads by airborne spores mainly via wind. In glasshouse environments, spores can be carried by people, on clothing for example, when walking past and contacting plants.



Fig 1.



Fig 2.



Fig 3.



Close-up of the rust pustules on the blueberry fruit.  
(All images DPIPW E)

## Distribution of Blueberry rust

The disease has been recorded in Europe, Argentina, Asia, Mexico, Canada and USA. In Australia it is present in New South Wales, Queensland and more recently Victoria.

## What to do if you suspect you have blueberry rust

If you find plants on your property that you suspect might be infected with blueberry rust it is very important that you not disturb or move the plant.

Care should also be taken to ensure that any clothes or equipment has not become contaminated.

You should, as soon as possible, phone the plant disease hotline on **1800 084 881** and report the infection.

## Ways you can protect your blueberry crop

Adopt a range of farm biosecurity measures that will assist in protecting your property from the entry and spread of pests and diseases. Farm biosecurity is a shared responsibility, and that of every person visiting or working on your property.

- Ensure you and your staff are aware of the disease, and are familiar with plant symptoms
- Disease identification information should be on-site and be easily accessible
- Limit the access of people (visitors and staff) onto your property
- Disinfect all equipment/vehicles that move off-site and return to operate on the property
- Implement a hygiene protocol for essential visitors (contractors, suppliers, etc.)
- Restrict all non-business vehicles from entry onto the property
- Minimise or allocate specific staff who might come in contact with host material
- Source blueberry host plant material from reputable professional growers that are known to be free from the disease
- Inspect imported blueberry host material prior to introduction to your property.

For detailed information, together with a range of farm biosecurity resources that will assist in protecting your property – and livelihood – visit the [Farm Biosecurity Program](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) ([www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au)) (the Program is a joint initiative of Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA).

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