



HAWAII INVASIVE SPECIES COUNCIL

Resolution No. 11-4

REGARDING 'ŌHI'IA RUST

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor

SHAN TSUTSUI
Lieutenant Governor

Hawai'i Invasive Species Council

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'Ōhi'a rust (*Puccinia psidii*), also known as guava rust, is a disease that can kill 'ōhi'a trees and other plants in the myrtle family. 'Ōhi'a rust can enter Hawai'i by hitchhiking on imported plants and plant parts in the myrtle family. Agriculture inspectors have intercepted 'ōhi'a rust on common myrtle in imported flower bouquets, although any plant material in the myrtle family, including eucalyptus foliage and wax flowers, could also bring in the rust.

Like the flu virus, there are different strains of 'ōhi'a rust. One strain of the rust has already arrived in Hawai'i and it quickly killed rose apple trees across the state, while 'ōhi'a and other local Myrtaceae showed lesser susceptibility. However, additional arrivals of any strains of this rust could pose a very real threat to the survival of 'ōhi'a trees, which comprise 80% of Hawai'i's native forest (nearly 1,000,000 acres). To protect 'ōhi'a and the water that is provided by a healthy ecosystem, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture will be proposing new rules restricting the importation of myrtle family plants, produce, and cut flowers via the rulemaking process.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Council support the establishment of a rule to restrict importation of plants in the Myrtle family into Hawai'i. We also recommend that the Council support a program promoting locally grown alternatives to high-risk imports, including members of the Myrtaceae family.

Action: Unanimously approved.