

# Pacific Pests, Pathogens and Weeds - Online edition

## Heliconia rust (237)

### Summary

- Widespread distribution. South America, Caribbean, Oceania. On *Heliconia*, wild and ornamental. An important disease of *Heliconia* used to wrap starchy puddings (laplap).
- Faint yellow spots on the leaves between the veins from midrib to margin. Reddish brown spots below as spores form. Leaves decay from the margins.
- Spread occurs as the spores are blown by wind.
- Cultural control: avoid planting under shade; space plants allowing air circulation; routinely collect diseased leaves and burn.
- Chemical control: unlikely to be economic, but if needed use copper or mancozeb (protectants); triazoles or strobilurins (eradicants).

### Common Name

Heliconia rust

### Scientific Name

*Puccinia heliconiae*. Also, known by an older name, *Uredo heliconiae*; a name that describes the type of spores produced by the rust.



Photo 1. The yellow spots of the Heliconia rust fungus, *Puccinia heliconiae*, on and between the veins, often on one side of the leaf before the other.



Photo 2. Irregular, reddish-brown spots of the Heliconia rust, *Puccinia heliconiae*, on the underside of the leaf discharging spores. If rubbed with a finger, the spores in the spots create a rust-like stain, hence the common name.



Photo 4. The lower surface of the leaf in Photo 3 showing that the spots of the Heliconia rust, *Puccinia heliconiae*, have turned brown on the left side and the margins are beginning to decay. On the right there are reddish-brown spots near the mid-rib and older brown spots nearer the margin.



Photo 3. Brown spots of the Heliconia rust, *Puccinia heliconiae*, appear on the upper leaf surface corresponding to those on the underside which are discharging spores. Soon after the margins of the leaves start to decay.



Photo 5. Severely infected leaf with large patches of decay within the blade of the leaf and at the margins, caused by the Heliconia rust, *Puccinia heliconiae*.



Photo 6. All the leaves in this group are infected by the Heliconia rust, *Puccinia heliconiae*, and show various stages of the disease.



Photo 7. Rolls of *Heliconia* leaves at the market in Espirito Santo, Vanuatu, with symptoms of the Heliconia rust, *Puccinia heliconiae*. The leaves are used to wrap grated starchy foods mixed with coconut milk, called *laplap*.

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Information from Liberato JR, Ray JD, Ganua TG (2008) *Puccinia heliconiae* on *Heliconia* sp. in Papua New Guinea. Australian Plant Disease Notes 3(1):132-134. ([https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315207379\\_Puccinia\\_heliconiae\\_on\\_Heliconia\\_sp\\_in\\_Papua\\_New\\_Guinea/link/59bb83d3a6fdcca8e55f9307/download](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315207379_Puccinia_heliconiae_on_Heliconia_sp_in_Papua_New_Guinea/link/59bb83d3a6fdcca8e55f9307/download))

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