

Boxwood Blight

Diagnostic characteristics:

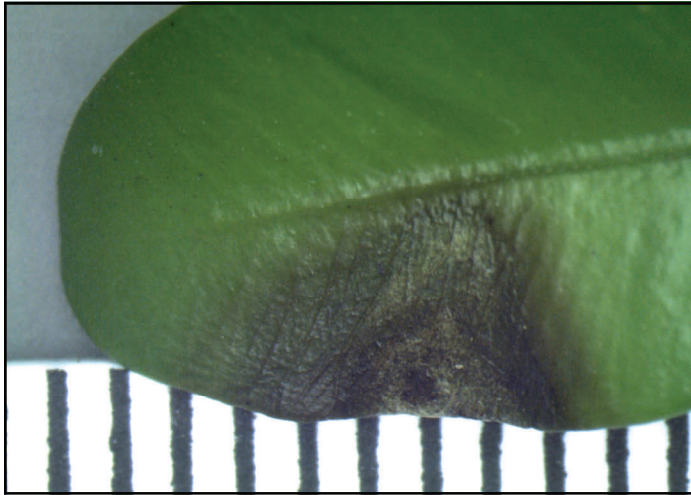
1. Defoliation



2. Leaf spots



3. Large, diffuse leaf spot



1 mm divisions

4. Blackened stems



Caution: The presence of the above characteristics does not confirm that the boxwood is infected with the boxwood blight fungus. However, there is a strong correlation between the presence of the characteristics and the disease. Please consult a qualified plant disease specialist or your local extension agent for assistance in diagnosing and dealing with boxwood blight.



Chesterfield Extension
P. O. Box 146
Chesterfield, VA 23832
804.751.4401



Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
102 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219
804.786.3515

2013 November Boxwood Blight Update

T. Michael Likins

- Boxwood blight (syn. box blight) is a fungal disease first described affecting boxwoods in Great Britain in the mid-1990s. In 2011, the disease was detected in a North Carolina and Virginia nursery as well as in many northeastern states, mid-Atlantic states, Oregon and British Columbia.
- In September 2013, a landscaper brought samples of ailing boxwood to the Chesterfield County Extension office for diagnosis. The sample was suspiciously similar to boxwood blight.
- Laboratory analysis in the Chesterfield Extension lab confirmed that the diseased boxwoods were infected with the boxwood blight fungus. Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services officials corroborated the diagnosis. This is the first known report of boxwood blight being detected on boxwoods in residential landscapes in Virginia.
- In October, a different landscaper brought suspicious material to the Chesterfield Extension Lab, and this likewise was diagnosed as boxwood blight. The location was from an established planting in the City of Richmond. A few days later, the disease was recorded from a different neighborhood in the City of Richmond.
- Box blight is a foliar and twig disease that defoliates shrubs from the ground upwards where conditions favor the fungus (wetter, darker conditions).
- All boxwoods are susceptible to some degree with *Buxus sempervirens* types (American and English) being more susceptible in general.
- Box blight generally will not kill outright, but may weaken a plant to the point where secondary infecting organisms will kill it.
- The disease organism is capable of being spread short distances in wind and wind-blown rain. There is observational evidence that leaf blowers can spread the disease locally.
- The spores of this fungus are very sticky and capable of adhering to shoes, clothing, planting stock and garden equipment.
- The box blight fungus can survive in debris and fallen leaves for up to 5 years, making it difficult to grow boxwoods in the same location.
- The box blight fungus can infect other members of the boxwood family such as *Pachysandra* sp. and *Sarcococca* sp. (sweet box).
- **Three Common Symptoms:**
 - Defoliation – usually starting at the base of the plant
 - Large, diffuse, dark brown leaf spots
 - Blackened twigs and stems
- **Recommendations from Chesterfield Extension:**
 - Actively maintain plant health with routine soil testing.
 - Use mulch sparingly; no more than 1 inch.
 - Don't guess. Have any suspicious symptoms diagnosed by a qualified plant health specialist or your local extension agent.
 - When sending or bringing in samples, make sure they are securely double bagged.
 - Wash hands, equipment and clothing before tending uninfected material.
 - **DO NOT TAKE SAMPLES TO YOUR LOCAL NURSERY.**
 - Excellent website for updates: www.boxwoodblight.org