

Boxwood Blight: In the Landscape of Pennsylvania

Boxwood blight, a disease that affects boxwood, pachysandra, and sarcococca, was first found in Pennsylvania in 2011. This disease is caused by the fungal species *Cylindrocladium*, and can result in complete leaf loss and blight of the plant. The disease cannot be identified from visual symptoms due to the fact that similar symptoms can be the result of other issues. It is necessary to have a laboratory confirm the presence of the fungus to diagnose boxwood blight. Spores of the fungus can be spread by humans, insects, animals and horticultural tools. The fungus can survive in leaf litter for years; control measures for the disease include destruction of the infected material and use of cultural practices. There is no known cure for the disease at this time.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has declared boxwood blight to be a “regulated pest.” The goal of regulating this disease is to slow its spread by human activities, particularly the propagation and distribution of boxwood and other host plants.

If you suspect you may have symptomatic plants, please contact your local Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Regional Office or your Penn State Cooperative Extension County Agent.



Symptoms may include spotted leaves and defoliation.
Picture taken by T. Olson, PDA



White "fuzzy" masses on the underside of a boxwood leaf. Picture taken by T. Olson, PDA

Homeowners and landscapers should sanitize tools, equipment and gloves when working with boxwood. A 10% bleach solution or other appropriate sanitizing solution to clean tools and equipment should be applied between pruning boxwood and after completing all pruning and cleaning. Removal and proper disposal of leaf debris will help limit the spread of the spores which carry the disease. Clothing should be thoroughly washed.

Boxwood, pachysandra and sarcococca should not be composted if removed due to Boxwood Blight. Spores live for years and will not be destroyed during composting.

Replanting with boxwood, pachysandra or sarcococca is not recommended, if the previous plants had Boxwood Blight. Even if diseased material is removed and the area cleaned, there are no guarantees the disease is removed. It is recommended to substitute other plant material.

For More Information on Boxwood Blight:

National Plant Diagnostic Network Pest Alert:

http://www.ppd.l.purdue.edu/PPDL/pubs/PPQ_NIS_BoxwoodBlight_Pest%20Alert.pdf

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Fact Sheet:

http://www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/documents/publications/fact_sheets/plant_pathology_and_ecology/boxwood_blight_a_new_disease_for_connecticut_and_the_u.s._12-08-11.pdf

Descriptions of Boxwood Diseases from the American Boxwood Company:

http://www.americanboxwood.com/resources_diseases.asp