

BOXWOOD BLIGHT

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR RETAIL

GARDEN CENTRES AND LANDSCAPERS

Boxwood Blight is caused by the plant pathogen, *Cylindrocladium buxicola*. Plant hosts include all species and cultivars within the genus *Buxus*. Other genera within the Buxaceae family, for example *Sarcococca*, may be susceptible. The following best management practices are recommended for all garden centres that purchase and sell *Buxus* to reduce their risk of importing and spreading this pathogen. As the science around this new disease becomes better known, these BMP's may change.

Identification of *C. buxicola*

Boxwood plants infected with *C. buxicola* would display symptoms such as leaf spots that are light to dark brown, with or without a dark border, as well as stem lesions or cankers that appear dark in colour. White spore masses develop on the undersides of the leaves post-infection, and when viewed under magnification, the spores are long and narrow, with one cross wall separating the spore into two parts.

The most commonly observed symptom is the rapid and severe defoliation of boxwood plants. Formal identification of *C. buxicola* is available through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) or your provincial diagnostics laboratory.

Further information and photos are available on the CNLA website: www.canadanursery.com

What can garden centres and landscapers do to protect themselves and their customers?

Until such time as Canadian nursery growers are able to implement BMPs and certify their nurseries through the Clean Plants program, immediate preventative measures that can be undertaken by garden centres and landscapers for the spring of 2012 are limited. The following outlines some basic precautions which should be exercised by all retail garden centres and landscape/maintenance contractors.

- The most important step is to exercise extreme caution in bringing boxwood to your premises. Be sure you know and trust your supplier. Do not import boxwood or boxwood liners from any European source.
- Incoming shipments should be inspected by trained staff. Boxwood displays should be inspected for visual symptoms at least every two weeks.
- Suspect plants should be segregated and samples sent to your provincial diagnostics laboratory for testing.
- Do not co-mingle boxwood if you purchase from more than one supplier. Whenever possible, set up segregation areas if receiving boxwood from more than one supplier. If necessary, keep plants labeled to track the vendor source.

- *C. buxicola* spores are easily transmitted by mechanical means, so if product needs to be pruned or trimmed, be sure to sanitize shears and pruners frequently.
- As *C. buxicola* can survive on plant debris, it is important to remove debris regularly by raking or vacuuming. Debris should be bagged for burial or incineration.
- Keep the plants well spaced to maximize airflow around the plants.
- Take precautionary measures when accepting returns of boxwood. Returned plants should immediately be placed in plastic bags for disposal.
- Garden centres, landscape contractors and their clients are strongly advised against introducing new boxwood plantings into landscapes or home gardens where mature boxwood are already planted until such time as further information on this disease, its spread and its control is better understood.

NOTE: As with all fungus diseases, plants that appear to be asymptomatic may show infection at a later date and it is therefore more appropriate to consider that boxwood plants from a certified facility are “apparently free from” Boxwood Blight.