BOXWOOD BLIGHT RESOURCE SHEET

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AmericanHort

Horticultural Research Institute

What is Boxwood Blight?

Boxwood Blight is a devastating disease that imperils boxwoods, a common landscape fixture because of its historic significance, year-round foliage, attractiveness, and deer resistance.

Introduction/The Basics

- Boxwood blight is established in at least 24 states in the U.S.

- Host plants include *Buxus* species, *Pachysandra*, and *Sarcococca*.

- Boxwood varieties vary in their tolerance levels to boxwood blight, with *B. sempervirens* types typically being more susceptible. Truly resistant boxwood varieties are unknown.

- Disease transmission primarily occurs through movement of infected plant material (cuttings, leaf debris, whole plants, etc.), contaminated landscape and garden tools and workers, and rain/irrigation splash.

Symptoms

- Only leaves and stems are affected in field conditions.

- First symptoms = light to dark brown, circular leaf spots with dark borders

- Infected stems have dark brown to black, elongated cankers.

- Rapid defoliation, especially in the lower canopy

If in doubt, please contact a local plant diagnostic lab for help. Boxwood blight can be confused with Volutella infections and even some insect pest infestations.

How the Industry is Finding Solutions

The Horticultural Research Institute (HRI), the research affiliate of AmericanHort, was a first-responder when boxwood blight was identified in the U.S. and quickly established a fund dedicated to support research efforts. HRI further advocates and supports research dollars from the Floriculture and Nursery Research Initiative, administered by USDA-ARS, and Farm Bill Section 10007, administered by USDA-APHIS. Since 2014, over $2.7 million dollars has been dedicated to solving boxwood blight issues.

Recently, HRI recognized the need for a standardized testing procedure to identify boxwood varieties' level of tolerance/susceptibility to boxwood blight. To meet this need, HRI has reopened the boxwood blight emergent fund and amassed a cadre of researchers to develop a testing protocol. This will help guide the nursery production, retail, and landscape design and management industries in better plant selection and utilization.

Additional Resources

A Best Management Practices Guide for nurseries was updated in 2017. The BMPs were developed by the Horticultural Research Institute, AmericanHort, and the National Plant Board (NPB). The BMPs provide guidelines for:

- training personnel in scouting and evaluating for boxwood blight,

- mitigating accidental introduction,

- mitigating local spread of the disease in cases of accidental introduction,

- pathogen eradication and containment.

BMPs are available for download at AmericanHort.org.

The NPB has also developed a model compliance agreement for growers either choosing to operate under a formal compliance agreement, or required to after detection of boxwood blight at their place of production.

1&**2**   Cankers; Canopy Defoliation

3&**4**   Infection Center; Disease Spread