

## **Boxwood Blight**

Boxwood blight is a disease of boxwood (*Buxus* spp.), causing rapid defoliation and plant dieback. The fungal disease is particularly devastating to American boxwood cultivars, which can defoliate within a week and die within one growing season. Plants are eventually weakened by repeated defoliation and dieback,

### **Symptoms**

The earliest symptoms include light or dark brown circular leaf spots with darker borders (Figure 1). However, because plants can defoliate soon after leaf spots develop, spots often go unnoticed.



Elongated, dark brown or black streak-like lesions appear on infected stems (Figure 2).



Boxwood blight results in rapid defoliation of plants (Figure 3).



## How is Boxwood Blight Spread?

Spores can be spread short distances via splashing water, wind, and wind- driven rain. Sticky spores may also “hitchhike” on garden tools, pets, clothing, or wet hands. Long distance spread occurs when infected plants or infested soil (debris) and equipment are moved from one location to another.

## Disease Management

Infected plants or plant parts should be removed from the landscape immediately to prevent spread. A rigid sanitation program is recommended, including destruction of infected plant material (whole plants or plant parts) and leaf debris where fungal spores reside. Gardeners may choose to prune partially or minimally infected plants and then employ a fungicide regime, especially during wet seasons

Avoid purchasing or receiving unhealthy plants. Homeowners should examine plants carefully before purchase, avoiding plants with leaf or stem lesions or an unhealthy appearance.

Use of resistant boxwood cultivars may also be used as a protective measure, although there are no immune cultivars.

Cultural practices can help prevent conditions that are conducive for the fungal pathogen. For example, promote rapid drying of leaves by widely spacing plants for increased air circulation. Overhead irrigation should be minimized.

Fungicides can protect plants from infection and suppress disease development, but **fungicides do not cure boxwood blight.**

## **Additional Resources**

[TN Dept. of Agriculture](#)

[Boxwood Blight Best Management Practices \(TN Dept. of AG\)](#)