



Boxwood Blight—A Disease New to Connecticut and the U.S.

In October 2011, a disease of boxwood new to the U.S. called “boxwood blight” was identified in Connecticut. The disease is caused by the fungus *Cylindrocladium pseudonaviculatum*. This fungus infects all aboveground portions of boxwood, but does not appear to infect the roots (Figures 1 and 2). Initial symptoms appear as light or dark brown spots or lesions on the leaves (Figure 3). These lesions often have dark borders.



Figure 1. Established plantings of boxwood infected with boxwood blight.



Figure 2. Symptoms of boxwood blight on boxwood from a landscape planting—note apparently healthy root system.

Spots enlarge and then coalesce, often with a concentric pattern or a zonate appearance (Figure 4). Infected leaves turn brown or straw colored, giving infected plants a “blighted” appearance (Figure 1). Defoliation often occurs very quickly after foliar symptoms first develop. The fungus also infects the stems, which results in distinctive and diagnostic dark brown to black lesions, sometimes with an angular, diamond-like pattern (Figure 5). Many black lesions can be found along a stem, from the soil line to the shoot tips (Figure 6). Heavily infected plants drop most of their leaves. Plants attempt to regrow; repeated infection and defoliation weaken the root system and lead to plant death, especially for young plants or new transplants.

Boxwood blight can spread very rapidly under warm and moist conditions. The fungus can also persist in leaf debris for at least five years.



Figure 3. Initial symptoms appear as dark or light brown spots on the leaves.



Figure 4. Blighting of leaves. Lesions often have a concentric pattern or a “zonate” appearance (arrow).



Figure 5. Diagnostic black cankers on stems (arrows).



Figure 6. Dieback on stems girdled by numerous black cankers (arrow).

More detailed information about this important new disease, including how the fungus is spread, its disease cycle, as well as management strategies for the landscape and production is available in a fact sheet by Dr. Sharon M. Douglas titled *Boxwood Blight—A New Disease for Connecticut and the U.S.* from: www.ct.gov/caes/pdio or by calling The Plant Disease Information Office of the Experiment Station (203.974.8601). 11 January 2012