

# BOXWOOD BLIGHT

*News From The Bedford Cooperative Extension Office*

Boxwood Blight is a new disease which has been identified in Bedford, VA. However, the source of the plants and whether they were actually planted in a Bedford landscape or just found in purchased plants not yet planted remains unclear. Regardless, it is likely just a matter of time before it is positively identified in a Bedford landscape. This is a hot topic and one that we all need to be informed about.



Black streaking on stems is characteristic of plants infected with Boxwood Blight  
Photo: *Plant Disease Clinic, Virginia Tech*

Boxwood blight (also known as box blight), caused by the fungus *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*<sup>1</sup>, is a serious fungal disease of boxwood that results in defoliation and decline of susceptible boxwood. In Virginia, boxwood blight was first identified in a nursery location in Carroll County in 2011. By the fall of 2013 it was found in other commercial nursery/retail operations and landscapes in several counties in Virginia. Once introduced to a landscape, boxwood blight is very difficult and costly to control with fungicides. The major means of spread of this disease is by movement of contaminated plant material (e.g. container or field-grown boxwood, boxwood greenery used for holiday decoration), but boxwood blight spores can also be spread on pruning tools, clothing, equipment and anything that might have contacted infected plants. Home growers can best protect their boxwood by following the measures listed below to avoid introduction of the disease to their landscape.

- VCE has assembled a Boxwood Task Force. They have developed recommended *Best Management Practices* for homeowners, landscapers, and plant retailers. There is a wealth of info at their website: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/agriculture/commercial-horticulture/boxwood-blight/>
- Master Gardeners are becoming familiar with this disease in order to be prepared to answer client questions. Boxwood Blight is now being covered more in the media. It is important that we understand this disease as well as the myriad other disorders that Boxwood can succumb to. Not every problem folks see in their boxwood will be this new blight.
- As with other plant problems, Cooperative Extension offices can submit samples to the VT Disease Clinic. The Clinic is coordinating with the VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to trace back positive samples when the incident involves purchased plants.

**Scott Baker**  
*Unit Coordinator*

*Bedford Cooperative Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Animal Science*  
(540) 586-7675, [scbaker@vt.edu](mailto:scbaker@vt.edu)

## MASTER GARDENER HELP DESK

Bedford County Extension Office: (540) 586-7675 / Email @ [BedfordMG@vt.edu](mailto:BedfordMG@vt.edu)

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