



Large boxwood hedge with aggressive blight.

# Volutella Blight in Boxwoods

Boxwoods are some of the most common landscape shrubs in the United States. Their vibrant green color often makes it a popular choice, but this past year has proven difficult for many reasons.

Coming out of winter, we saw many boxwoods with noticeable winter damage and some of the worst boxwood leafminer damage we have seen in years. In May, we had an unexpected three-week period of high temperatures and no rain. This drought caused further stress on boxwoods.

Throughout the summer and fall, a common disease found in boxwoods, Volutella blight, has been readily apparent. This fungal disease affects the leaves and stems of boxwoods, initially spotted by chlorosis (yellowing) of the leaves.

A lab sample may be recommended by our ISA Certified Arborists to confirm the diagnosis.

## Symptoms

Volutella blight symptoms are usually easily spotted by light tan/brown colored twigs and leaves in a spotting pattern throughout a boxwood plant. The affected leaves do not tend to fall to the ground, but instead stay attached to the branches.

## Treatment

The best and most consistent treatment is to prune out dead areas and watch for new growth regenerating from within the plant. It is important to cut an infected branch just a few inches below where the symptoms are spotted.

Make sure to disinfect your pruners between cuts to reduce the spread of disease. You can dip them in a 10% bleach

solution, Lysol, or 70% alcohol mixture. Avoid shearing boxwoods too tightly as this will cause further stress.

To avoid drought stress, water boxwoods at the base of the plant during dry spells. Drought stress can also pre-dispose plants to infection. Be sure to not prune a boxwood while it is wet.

If possible, a heavily infested boxwood should be removed from surrounding healthy plants to avoid spreading disease.



Birdseye view of a boxwood that had half of its canopy removed due to Volutella blight and is now sprouting back nicely.



Spotting of blight. These locations should be pruned off to avoid spreading.

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