

Box blight information

What are the symptoms?

Box blight (**Cylindrocladium buxicola** or **Pseudonectria (Volutella) buxi**) is fast becoming a problem due a series of wet summers causing the blight to spread rapidly throughout established hedges or topiary. Although there is no solid evidence for controlling box blight, there are a few remedies that can alleviate or hopefully with a regular regime suppress the symptoms.

- **Spotting** and **streaking** can occur along the **leaves which then turns grey** for the *Cylindrocladium* species and **pinkish leaves** for the *Pseudonectria* species.
- Both fungi cause leaves to go **brown and fall**, leading to bare patches on the plants.
- **C. buxicola**, the more damaging of the two, also causes **black streaks and dieback on young stems**.
- During spells of high humidity white spores can be produced on the underside of leaves called sporodochia.

Can I control or eradicate it?

There are no known chemical or physical actions that can completely eradicate the box blight but following a few simple guidelines can either prevent or suppress the blight.

- Top dressing in spring encourages new micro-organisms and friendly bacteria.
- Keep a distance of at least 30cm between box and other plants to allow good ventilation.
- Do not clip in humid weather (or just after it has been raining)
- Disinfect all tools regularly when clipping hedges or after each plants for topiary
- Regular spraying or feeding regime to keep the plants healthy.
- Do not plant in dark, damp or poor ventilated areas.
- Water-in new plants avoiding the foliage as overhead watering can spread spores.
- If all else fails, prune hard back, remove **all** fallen leaf debris and burn the infected branches.

Products and alternatives available

Chemical

Some chemical sprays are available to the home and garden market and some for professional use only. Systemic fungicides will travel right through the root and shoots of the plants. A regular regime of spraying is required. Always read the guidelines for spraying applications.

- **Top Buxus**
- **Bayer Fungus Fighter and Bayer Fungus Fighter plus**
- **Guard 2000 and Actiferm**

Alternatives

There are other plants available that are not affected by the blight, many can achieve the tightly clipped effect of box such as Hebe and Pittosporum. There is a good choice of colours, textures and form available.

- *Euonymus japonicus* 'Microphyllus'
- *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball'
- *Ilex crenata*
- *Rosmarinus officinalis*
- *Lonicera nitida*
- *Lavendula angustifolia*
- *Teucrium x lucidrys*
- *Berberis darwinii*
- *Osmanthus delavayi*
- *Thuja occidentalis* 'Tiny Tim'
- *Hebe cupressoides*