

# What is Boxwood Blight?

## Synonyms

- Box blight
- Boxwood leaf drop
- *Calonectria pseudonaviculata* (teleomorph)

## Plant hosts

*Buxus* species, *Sarcococca* species, and *Pachysandra* species

## Symptoms



*Symptoms of stem blight*



*Symptoms of leaf blight*

Symptoms on boxwood include light or dark brown circular leaf spotting and black longitudinal or diamond shaped lesions on stems. Progression of the disease results in defoliation of leaves and an overall straw colored appearance of the plant. Disease transmission is increased in moist environments, making host plants in greenhouses particularly susceptible. Boxwood blight has a rapid disease cycle that can be completed in one week. The fungus can form resting structures (chlamydo spores and microsclerotia) that can survive for five or more years on host organic debris in the soil. Mortality most often occurs in seedlings, but may also take place in older plants, especially if infected with a secondary pathogen. This disease may be confused with *Volutella* leaf and stem blight, a common disease on boxwood in Oregon.

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## **Transmission**

The boxwood blight pathogen produces spores in a sticky, slimy matrix when environmental conditions are suitable. The spores are splash-dispersed and can be carried by wind or wind-driven rain over short distances. Long distance spread is thought to occur primarily through infected plant material and water (rain splash, irrigation, runoff, etc...) but can also be dispersed by human activities (contaminated boots, clothing, pruning tools, and equipment), animals, and birds.

## **Geographic distribution**

Boxwood blight has been reported throughout Europe, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. In the United States, 16 states have reported boxwood blight: Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Virginia. In Canada, it has been found in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec.