

Buxus Blight

This is a disease specific to Buxus species and affects the stems and leaves of the box plants. It is caused by 2 fungi and is more prevalent in warm humid conditions.

Symptoms

The leaves go brown and fall off, leading to bare patches in the plant. Black streaks can form on the stems and die back of that stem will occur. Orange spores can form on the underside of the leaves. Symptoms seem to be more severe towards the end of August/September. The spores of this disease are sticky so after any pruning or work on box plants it is advisable to sterilise the tools used to prevent the spread of this from one area to another. It is also possible for the spores to be spread by animals, insects and even rain water splashing on the soil and on clothing. Recent results from sap analysis suggest that Buxus Blight is worse in crops with low levels of calcium.



Control

The most effective way to control this disease is to dig up and destroy badly affected plants including all the leaves that have fallen off and the top layer of soil as well. If the plant is too valuable to remove, cut out the affected area and destroy and remove all fallen leaves and the top layer of soil as well.

There are no fungicides available to amateurs with specific recommendations for use against box blight. However, the fungicides difenoconazole (Westland Plant Rescue Control), tebuconazole (Bayer Garden Multirose Concentrate 2) and triticonazole (Scotts Fungus Clear Ultra) are labelled for control of other diseases on ornamentals and could therefore be used legally on box (at owner's risk) to try and control box blight.

How to Reduce Risk

The best way to reduce the risk is excellent husbandry. Making sure that after every trim all debris is removed immediately and that no trimmings are left in the foliage. Once trimming is finished a chemical called Plantmate (Active ingredient Trichoderma) can be sprayed on to help seal fresh cuts. Plant Mate is applied at 50g/100L with spray oil 150ml/100L. When trimming hand shears are better than machine cuts as the foliage is damaged less with shears reducing the stress on the plants, therefore reducing the risk of disease developing.

Folia feed will also help to strengthen the plant and help reduce the risk of infection. BIO20 at 300ml/100L folia feed regularly (every 2 weeks or so). Avoid planting in areas that are too sheltered as the disease likes moist sunny sheltered areas.

Readyhedge recognises that Buxus Blight can be a problem and is spraying its plants as a preventative measure, on a regular spray program as per any other horticultural pest or disease, and believes that the plants we dispatch are clear of infection. We use Octave (200g/100L) with spray oil (150ml/100L) as part of our spray regime. Because of it is spread around the country we cannot accept a claim for any infection after it has been planted in to a garden.

Visit the RHS website for further information at www.rhs.org.uk or phone for updates.