



Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Boxwood Blight Detected in Additional Alabama Landscapes

AUBURN, Ala.-- Boxwood blight has been detected in recently installed landscape plants across Alabama. A plant pathologist with [Alabama Extension](#) says when infected boxwoods are planted in a landscape, the pathogen can easily spread to established boxwoods.

"The fungus that causes boxwood blight is easily spread by splashing water whether that be irrigation water or rain," said [Dr. Kassie Conner](#). "This fungal disease can also be spread by equipment, soil, shoes, clothing and even animals."

In addition to these infected landscapes, the disease was also discovered at retail garden centers across the state.

Conner said the [Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries \(ADAI\)](#) is in the process of tracking down the source of the infected plants.

"ADAI put a stop sale order on boxwood plants suspected to be infected by boxwood blight at the retail centers," she said. "The boxwoods at those outlets will be inspected, and those found to be infected will be destroyed."

Conner's colleague, [Dr. Jim Jacobi](#) said the disease had an ally in this spring's cool, wet weather.

"We had the perfect environmental conditions this spring for the development and spread of this disease," said Jacobi, who is an Extension plant pathologist based at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

Boxwood Blight Symptoms

Early symptoms of boxwood blight appear as light to dark brown spots on leaves. These leaf spots may merge to cover much of the leaf surface. Infected plants will shed these diseased brown or straw-colored leaves, almost completely defoliating the plant. Brown to reddish-brown colored lesions with tan to light brown centers form on shoots and larger stems. Later these lesions turn black.

Conner said that while boxwood typically does not die from boxwood blight, it is a devastating disease.

“Infected nursery stock is unattractive and unsalable,” she said. “Diseased plants in the landscape are unsightly and may not recover even with appropriate fungicide treatments. Furthermore, boxwoods cannot be replanted in areas where infected plants were removed. The pathogen can live in infected debris in the soil for up to five years.”

Jacobi and Conner urge both landscape professionals and home gardeners to be on the lookout for this disease.

“Landscape professionals and gardeners should become familiar with boxwood blight symptoms and inspect any boxwood they purchase or that may have been added recently to a landscape,” said Jacobi.

Contact Plant Diagnostic Labs If Found

Nursery and landscape professionals should contact their local diagnostic lab ([Auburn University Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#) or [Birmingham Plant Diagnostic Laboratory](#)) should they observe plants with suspicious symptoms (leaf spots, black stem lesions or defoliation). They should also isolate the diseased plants. If boxwood blight is found, burning of the infected plants is recommended.

Conner added that all infected plant material has been imported into Alabama from areas that are known to have boxwood blight.

“We have several boxwood producers in Alabama that do not have the disease in their nurseries and are working very hard to keep their material free of the disease,” she said. “We encourage anyone planning on installing Boxwoods to purchase plants produced in Alabama.”

The ADAI and Alabama Cooperative Extension are working to survey areas where Boxwood Blight has been found in the landscape to prevent further spread of the pathogen.