

BOXWOOD CANKER

Pseudonectria buxi



Boxwood canker – *Pseudonectria buxi* is a fungus that survives in affected branches and leaves. Under the right conditions, the canker will kill the entire plant. Winter injury makes boxwood more prone to this canker fungus. Stressed plants and wounds favor disease development. This disease also makes the plant more prone to winter injury. Branches die back and leaves turn from green to light green-yellow and finally to shades of tan. Affected leaves turn up and lie close to the stem. Small, rose-colored, waxy fungus fruiting bodies (sporodochia) appear on lower surfaces of affected leaves and on diseased branches. These can persist into the winter. Wet weather helps disperse the spores in these structures. The spores infect dead buds and other winter injured plant parts. The spores also infect through pruning wounds. Keep plants healthy by growing the plants in the right location and use good cultural practices in maintaining them.

Winter Injury

Winter injury may be caused by very low temperatures and drought stress. With excessively low temperatures, the moisture in the cells freezes (due to chemical compounds in plants, moisture freezes at various degrees below freezing). Drought stress already has resulted in limited moisture in the plant cells. Dry, freezing winds during the winter reduces the moisture level even farther often resulting in dead plant tissue. Leaves are usually the first to die, followed by buds and then the smaller twigs. Diseases can help magnify or increase susceptibility to winter kill. Nectria canker kills the sapwood tissue thus reducing or even cutting off moisture to tissue further out on the plant. Winterkill also makes plants more prone to infectious diseases and insect problems.

Control

Prune out dead and dying branches and destroy. Soil test to check the pH and nutrients. Keep well watered but do not overwater fungicides. Applications of a copper fungicide before new growth appears in the spring may be helpful.