

BOXWOOD BLIGHT FOUND IN WEST VIRGINIA RETAIL LOCATIONS

Charleston, W.Va. – Boxwood Blight, a devastating pest to boxwoods, has been identified in West Virginia retail locations. The plants identified were produced at a large nursery on the west coast and multiple varieties/sizes were shipped at the same time. Plants were sold in close proximity to each other which would indicate a possibility of infection.

Spring/Summer conditions in 2015 have been prime for fungal pests which flourish in warm, wet weather. Symptoms of this disease usually start near the bottom of the plant with dark-colored leaf spots increasing in size and number to encompass the entire leaf. The leaf turns straw colored and falls, creating notable litter beneath the plant and exposing dark colored, linear cankers parallel to the leafless stems. The disease affects all parts of the plant above the soil so infected plants will try to recover only to be defoliated again which further weakens the root system. Repeated infestations, as conditions allow, will eventually kill the plant. The plant may be infected but show no symptoms due to environmental conditions adverse to the disease.

Eric Ewing, WVDA Plant Industries Division Director, advises using preventative measures to save the boxwoods that are not already infected.

“There is no control for plants that are already infected. However, a combination of good cultural practices and protectant fungicide sprays may prevent healthy plants from becoming infected,” Ewing said. “For information regarding this type of treatment, contact the WVDA Plant Industries Division at 304-558-2212.”

The Blight has been verified throughout Europe and identified in the Eastern United States in 2011. Regulatory agencies are constantly on the lookout for the pest in landscape plantings, nurseries and retail locations.

If you have purchased, installed or simply have boxwoods in the landscape you should inspect them regularly for leaf spots or other signs of this disease. Information on this pest can be found by searching the internet. You can also contact the WVDA Plant Industries Division at (304) 558-2212 for more information.

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The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit www.wvagriculture.org.