



photo courtesy of University of Delaware

## A New Disease Threat to Boxwood Species

Are you tired of the hot, humid weather yet? Along with the hot weather there have been periods of heavy rainfall here in Shelby County. I have gotten a few calls about fungal diseases, which is understandable given the abundance of rainfall, and humid conditions we have had in the last month. A couple of those questions focused on Boxwood Blight.

Boxwood blight is a new disease that poses a potential threat to boxwood species in this area. Boxwood blight is caused by the fungus *Cylindrocladum pseudonaviculatum*. It was first reported in the U.S. in October 2011 in North Carolina. It has now been confirmed in 10 states in the U.S. including Tennessee.

Presently, all boxwood species are considered susceptible to some extent. What occurs is rapid and severe defoliation followed by twig dieback. The fungus can infect above-ground portions of boxwood, but it does not affect the roots. The initial symptoms of infection are dark or light brown leaf spots. These spots often have dark borders. The infected leaves will become a brown or straw color. Defoliation usually follows within a few days of seeing the infected leaves. Dark brown to black stem lesions can also be a symptom of the infection. Under humid conditions, masses of white fruiting bodies can be seen on the under-surface of infected leaves. Be sure to take a hand lens with you as you inspect the plant for this fungus.

Infected plants should be removed and discarded immediately. This will help to limit the spread and movement of this fungus. If you think your boxwood species is under attack from this fungus, please let me know. If needed we can send a sample of the diseased specimen to Dr. Alan Windham, who is our Extension Plant Pathologist, at the Soil, Plant & Pest Lab in Nashville for further analysis. It is very important that we get out in front of these new disease threats as soon as possible.

Until next time, happy gardening



*Christopher Cooper*