

Buxus sempervirens Common Boxwood¹

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Introduction

Long a tradition in colonial landscapes, boxwood is a fine textured plant familiar to most gardeners and non-gardeners alike. Eventually reaching 6 to 8 feet-tall (old specimens can be much taller), boxwood grows slowly into a billowing mound of soft foliage. Flowers are borne in the leaf axils and are barely noticeable to the eye, but they have a distinctive aroma that irritates some people.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Buxus sempervirens*: Common Boxwood
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS



Figure 2. Full Form, Manicured - *Buxus sempervirens*: Common Boxwood
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

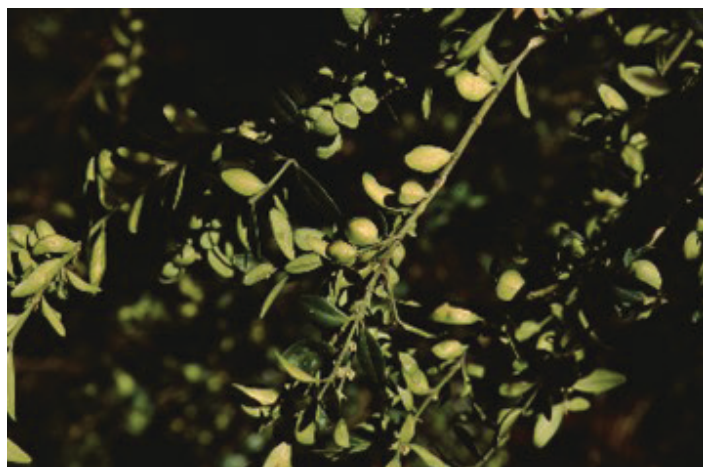


Figure 3. Leaf - *Buxus sempervirens*: Common Boxwood
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

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General Information

Scientific name: *Buxus sempervirens*

Pronunciation: BUCK-sus sem-pur-VYE-renz

Common name(s): common boxwood, common box, American boxwood

Family: *Buxaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 6 through 8 (Figure 4)



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Credits: undefined

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: border; edging; foundation; superior hedge

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 8 to 20 feet

Spread: 10 to 15 feet

Plant habit: round

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: oblong; ovate

Leaf venation: none, or difficult to see

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristic: spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: irregular

Fruit length: less than 1/2 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; not particularly showy

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun

Soil tolerances: slightly alkaline; clay; sand; acidic; loam

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Boxwood makes a beautiful clipped hedge, lending a formal air to any landscape. It looks best when located along a foundation or as a border along a walk or path. Plant it far enough away from the walk unless you plan on regular clipping to keep the walk clear. Locating it several feet away will keep the foliage away from the walk for several years. Its distinctive form and rich, dark color make it less appropriate for mass planting or for specimen planting. It can be clipped into and maintained in virtually any shape. Unpruned plants maintain a more-or-less globe shape.

A partially shaded or sunny spot is best suited for boxwood. It enjoys a clay or loamy soil with a reasonable amount of organic matter. Sandy soils are usually not suited for boxwood unless irrigation can be provided, or plants are protected from all-day sun. Soil borne nematodes also enjoy boxwood roots in sandy soils.

Many cultivars exist with various leaf forms and variegation, plant shapes and sizes.

Pests and Diseases

Boxwood leaf miner is the traditional and perennial pest of boxwood. Infestation rarely kills plants, but foliage can be marred and severely discolored if the infestation is serious. Soil nematodes can be especially troublesome in sandy soils. Roots rot if soil is kept too wet.