

Virginia Agencies and Stakeholders Collaborate to Address an Emerging Disease

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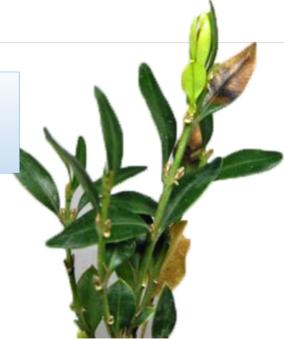
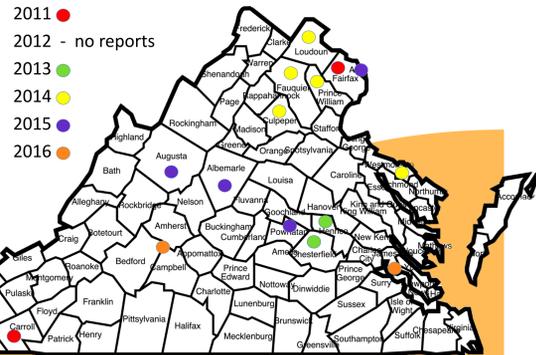
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Background: Boxwood is a significant component of historic and contemporary Virginia landscapes, and an important agricultural commodity in Virginia. Following the introduction of boxwood blight, caused by the fungus *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*, in 2011, Virginia agencies formed a task force composed of Virginia Cooperative Extension, research and

regulatory personnel to address the problem. In cooperation with stakeholders, the task force developed best management practices (BMP's) and a web site devoted to boxwood blight information. This cooperative effort will serve as a model for addressing future emerging diseases in Virginia.

Oct 2011: Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) confirms first case of boxwood blight in Virginia in a nursery in Carroll County.

The collaborative partnership established among research, extension, and regulatory representatives and stakeholders who participated in the boxwood blight response has established a new model for addressing future emerging plant disease issues in Virginia.



VDACS works with grower to encourage and oversee destruction of infected plants introduced to a nursery in Carroll County, VA. Introduced boxwood plants are destroyed, but asymptomatic plants remain at the site.

Since publication of the 7 BMP's (May-Dec. 2014), 4306 copies of the BMP's have been downloaded from the VBBTF web site and >3500 wallet-sized cards have been distributed. Unsolicited feedback indicates that the web site serves as a useful guide to boxwood growers, professional landscapers and extension agents in VA, other states, and Canada.

The rapid response of the Virginia Boxwood Blight Task Force (VBBTF) following boxwood blight's introduction to VA raised awareness and increased publicity via local news articles, radio interviews, and meetings conducted by county agents.

As of 2016: Boxwood blight confirmed in 16 Virginia counties

Fall 2011: VDACS responds to initial boxwood blight introduction to Virginia

Researchers at VDACS and Virginia Tech begin to investigate mechanisms of survival and spread of *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*. Presence of microsclerotia (long-term survival structures) in infected leaves is confirmed by Norm Dart (VDACS).

One trace-forward is found in Fairfax County in 2011, but no boxwood blight is found outside Carroll County in 2012.

May 2014: Virginia Boxwood Blight Task Force web site is launched.



Wallet-sized card developed to advertise web site.



Regulatory, extension, and research personnel meet at site of boxwood blight introduction to VA to evaluate status of the disease. By Nov. 2013, disease has spread to neighboring properties.

Dec 2013: Virginia Boxwood Blight Task Force is formed

Fall 2013: Boxwood blight spreads within county of origin and to Richmond, VA



Carroll County, where disease was introduced, has many backyard growers who supply the holiday greenery industry, complicating disease control measures. Need for educational materials becomes clear.



Informational meeting is held for growers and local greenery industry in county of introduction.



- Web site:
- ✓ BMP's for various clientele
 - ✓ Fungicide recommendations
 - ✓ Sanitizer recommendations
 - ✓ Cultivar resistance reactions (NCSU research results)
 - ✓ Image gallery

VDACS promotes Boxwood Blight Cleanliness Program and posts list of participating nurseries on VDACS web site.

Task force members develop initial drafts of best management practices (BMP's) for various clientele, including home growers, nurseries, landscapers, and greenery producers.

Task force meets with stakeholders, including representatives from the professional landscaping, wholesale and retail nursery, and greenery industries. Individual BMP's are revised according to stakeholder comments.

