



Nursery News

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Thinking Outside The Box... The Many Uses of Boxwood

Boxwood in History

Boxwood is said to be the oldest known garden ornamental, the first documented ornamental use was in Egypt in 4,000 BC. Boxwood were the defining plant in formal gardens in Europe, and came to the Virginia Colony in the mid 1600's. The common name Boxwood comes from the wood of Buxus species which dense and fine grained, (it is one of the few woods heavier than water), and was used for carving ornate boxes. The dense, small leaves and slow growth habit make boxwood perfect for pruned hedges and topiary, or left alone they form a nice soft round shrub.

The Four Seasons of Boxwood

Boxwood can be used in almost any landscape. They provide a great green backdrop to accent flowering plants. The tiny yellow flowers are not very conspicuous but have a light scent and draw bees in March or April before many other plants are active. Used as a specimen, boxwood are a low maintenance, naturally rounded



shrub. Hedges and borders of any size can be created by the wide variety of shapes and sizes of Boxwood cultivars. The leaves of boxwood contain an alkaloid that is toxic when eaten, so deer and rodents tend to leave them alone. They are often used in topiary and bonsai because of the dense small foliage and slow growth. Boxwood are also great in container displays with annuals and perennials in the growing season, and add shape and green to a winter display.

There are approximately 90 species and 160 cultivars of Buxus, 115 of which are commercially available. There are a wide variety of forms, sizes, leaf size and color, growth rate, and hardiness.

How to Grow Healthy Boxwood

Boxwood prefer to grow in part shade, but if well-watered they can adapt to sun or shade. They prefer fertile, well-drained soil, (pH 6.5-7.2) but can tolerate drought once healthy and established in the landscape. To grow healthy boxwood in the landscape it is important to protect the roots which grow close to the surface by mulching and avoid cultivating near the plants. To keep the great evergreen color in winter, they may need protection from drying winter winds. Fertilize by soil test and if nitrogen deficiencies can be seen in yellowing of lower leaves, leaf drop, or winter bronzing.

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Boxwood Cultivars at Glacier Oaks Nursery

Buxus micropylla var koreana x B. sempervirens hybrids
selected to be hardy, compact, and have good year round leaf color

Buxus Chicagoland Green® ('Glencoe') (5'hx3'w) Zone 4

A dense broad oval growth habit with glossy green foliage. A very hardy and uniform growth habit makes this variety an excellent choice for hedges and formal designs.

Substitute For:

- Buxus Green Velvet- (3'hx3'w) rounded, slower growing 'sister' cultivar
- Buxus Green Ice- (4'hx4'w) Zone 5, hardy, deep green, without the boxwood fragrance

Buxus Northern Charm™ ('Wilson') (3'hx3'w) Zone 4

New growth is bluish green and matures to emerald dark green globe.

Substitute For:

- Buxus Green Gem- compact, slow growing (2'hx2'w)
- Buxus Green Mound- (3'hx3'w) dark glossy green mound
- Buxus North Star™ (3'hx3'w) Zone 5- hardy, dense globe shape, good winter color, dark green

