

# HILDEBRANT NURSERIES

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QUALITY NURSERY SUPPLIES AND PRODUCTS SINCE 1923

## VOLUTELLA DISEASE IN DWARF ENGLISH BOXWOOD

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Dwarf English Boxwood is a dense, compact boxwood widely used for hedges and borders.. It's dense foliage causes poor air circulation through the plant. This poor air circulation, in turn, creates an environment suitable for invasion of a disease known as *Volutella*, that thrives on close humid conditions.

Symptoms of the invasion of this disease can vary from plant to plant. A general description of the symptoms can include some, or all, of the following:

- A slight smell similar to diesel fuel can sometimes be detected.
- A slow progression in foliage color change, over time, from normal:
  - to a dark olive green shade,
  - to a bronze-orange color,
  - to dusty brown- straw color.
  - This is followed (many months later) by the foliage dropping off and leaving a dead, bare branch.

This disease is really a problem in the woody tissue of the plant. The color changes in the foliage are only an outward, symptom of the invasion of the fungus. Currently, there are no chemicals available that can control infections of this disease. Prevention is currently the only means that you have to assist in dealing with this problem.

You must try to increase air moving through the plant to lessen the close humid conditions. It is recommended that you annually thin the foliage of the whole plant, in the November - December time period. This can have a significant effect in reducing the invasion of *Volutella*.

Try to remove about ten percent of the plant's outer branches, distributed evenly throughout all surfaces of the plant. The technique is to reach in about six or eight inches, and using a very sharp Felco-like clipper (a bypass type of clipper), clip a branch off and remove it. Never break the branches -- always use a sharp clipper to make a clean cut. Continue removing these small branches on all sides, and the top, of the plant, until you have created many small openings that will allow air to circulate. Continue to remove branches until small interior twigs are able to be seen when looking closely at the plant, but not being readily noticeable from a distance. This way you are not sacrificing the good appearance of the plant. Important: spray or wipe your clippers with alcohol after you finish trimming one plant, before you move to the next. If you do not sanitize your clippers, you will spread the disease from one plant to another on the blades of the clippers.

There are actually three foliage layers on an English boxwood. The plant keeps its leaves for three growing years, each year's new leaves cover the previous year's leaves. So you must reach down into the plant, far enough, to get below the lowest layer of the foliage, when you cut the branch.

Although *Volutella* is not technically a nutritional problem, it can badly weaken the plant by stealing significant portions of the foliage. It is in the foliage where the plant uses photosynthesis to manufacture the plant's food. As a result of this, the plant can be very quickly put into a food crisis. If *Volutella* is involved with your boxwood, it is very important that you supplement the plant's nutrition. This is done by applying a regimen of several applications per year of Vitamin B-1 combined with Full Bloom fertilizer. These are very special types of plant nutrition products that target plant food deficiencies and stress in boxwood, and are the only ones we have found that work well.

We have a special handout that covers relieving stress in plants that is caused by disease, insect, or water problems. Please contact us for further information.