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Dear Valued Customers of Westchester Tree Life:

We want to keep you aware that Boxwood Blight, which began to appear the past few years in the residential landscapes in Westchester County and surrounding areas, will still be a major problem for 2020. Boxwood Blight, as the name suggests, affects Boxwoods of all varieties in a devastating way and can also affect Pachysandra and Sarcococca (Sweet Box). Please read the important information below on this horrible blight:

What is it Boxwood Blight?

This disease is nothing short of catastrophic to Boxwoods. Boxwood Blight spreads rapidly in warm, wet weather and can devastate the host plant in as little as one week! Furthermore, the disease is unabated by the cold of winter, spreads easily from plant to plant by means of splashing water and/or wind, and is highly contagious for long periods of time (up to five years according to research). Also, the diseased spores can attach themselves to human clothing, animal fur, and unsterilized tools and be transmitted to plants easily and unknowingly.

What are the symptoms of Boxwood Blight?

Many plants can have this disease without showing any evidence. Initial symptoms appear as dark or light brown spots or lesions on the leaves. These leaves often have dark borders as well. In more advanced stages of Boxwood Blight the leaves turn brown, fall off, while the stems develop brown or black lesions.

What can I do?

Currently there is no cure for Boxwood Blight; however, there are management options available to help slow the spread of the disease.

- Stop or reduce overhead watering such as sprinkler systems for susceptible plants. If watering is required, then soaker hoses or drip lines are better options.
- Limit contact with susceptible plants as much as possible. This includes pets, too.
- Landscape personnel should limit pruning to dry weather conditions only and all pruning equipment should be sterilized with a bleach and water solution or other acceptable cleaners.
- Plants which are symptomatic should be removed from your landscape as soon as possible. In some cases it may be possible to prune out infected sections of the plant. Early detection is critical for this, but success is not certain.
- Refrain from buying new, or planting new, susceptible species of plants: Boxwood, Pachysandra, Sarcococca (Sweet Box).
- Preventative chemical treatments:
Studies show that there is some success with preventative sprays. Although it cannot be reversed, the spread of the disease can be slowed down and uninfected plants may be protected. This may be a viable option for those who have a significant investment in Boxwood plantings; however, it must be understood that success is not guaranteed.

We would be happy to inspect your susceptible plantings and recommend a course of action. Please call our office for more information: 914-238-0069.