



Cooperative Extension Service  
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

## ***Buxus sempervirens***<sup>1</sup>

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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 (Fig. 1). Eventually reaching 6- to 8-foot-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.

### **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 (Fig. 2)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** border; edging; foundation; superior hedge

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

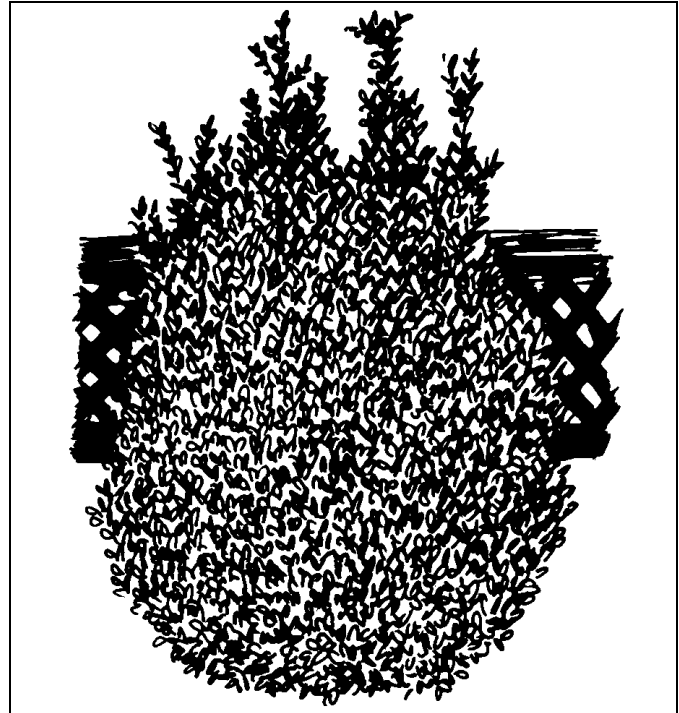
### **Description**

**Height:** 8 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** dense



**Figure 1.** Common Boxwood.

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

#### **Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**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 .5 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  
**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive  
**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.



**Figure 3.** Foliage of Common Boxwood