**Buxus - Boxwood** *(Buxaceae)*

*Buxus* is perhaps the best of the broadleaf, evergreen, small, formal shrubs. Boxwood is available in several forms and excellent when properly used in shady conditions as a specimen, edging, or hedge shrub.

### FEATURES

**Form**
- small, medium, or large broadleaf evergreen shrub, depending upon species, hybrid, or cultivar; all modern hybrids are small shrubs
- small versions grow slowly to 2' tall x 2' wide, whereas larger versions mature after many years at 15' tall x 15' wide
- upright oval to upright rounded growth habit
- slow to very slow growth rate

**Culture**
- full sun to full shade but do best in partial shade
- mulch to protect the shallow, fibrous roots from summer drought and winter dessication
- site in protected areas, away from wind and direct sun for best performance
- a variety of cosmetic, physiological, pest, and disease problems occasionally affect this species
- abundantly available in the trade
- responds very well to periodic shearing and shaping

**Foliage**
- evergreen, medium green to dark green, opposite, elliptical, 0.5-1" long, depending upon species, hybrid, and cultivar
- short petioles lead to a grooved mid-rib
- foliage on some cultivars may turn yellowish-brown in winter

**Flowers**
- cream-colored inflorescences in late Apr. and early May occur only on mature shrubs, being noticeable but not showy
- somewhat malodorous or fragrant, depending upon personal perception
- attract bees

**Fruits**
- ornamentally insignificant black seeds within brown capsules, often not seen

**Twigs**
- green, thin, 4-sided, eventually turning light brown

**Trunk**
- usually not applicable; on larger specimens, several trunks are usually present, but foliage and stems usually cover them all the way to the ground

### USAGE

**Function**
- formal or informal shrub, usually for shady conditions, commonly used as a hedge, foundation planting, edger, or facer shrub
- can also be used for formal gardens, topiary gardens, or English gardens, as it responds very well to shearing

**Texture**
- fine texture
- thick density

**Assets**
- maintains a dense, formal appearance even without pruning (low maintenance)
- lustrous dense evergreen foliage
- can be sheared into a formal hedge, shrub, or topiary
- grows very well in partial shade

**Liabilities**
- slow growth
- foliage may burn on some forms or species in severe winters, especially at the stem tips
- malodorous inflorescences for larger, very mature forms
- some cultivars or species have unattractive brownish-yellow foliage all winter

**Habitat**
- Zones 5 (actually variable from 4 to 6, depending upon type) to 8
- the various species are native to Korea, Japan, or the Mediterranean; most modern cultivars are hybrid selections

### SELECTIONS

**Alternates**
- small evergreen shrubs, especially those with a globed, oval, or pyramidal habit that is tight and dense *(Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Nana', Picea abies 'Pumila', Taxus x media 'Everlow', etc.)
- small shrubs that tolerate shady conditions *(Fothergilla gardenii, Itea virginica 'Henry's Garnet', etc.)

**Cultivars – Variants - Related species**

- **Buxus microphylla var. koreana** - Korean Littleleaf Boxwood
  - grown for its hardiness from zone 4 to 9, but its miniature foliage usually turns a very unattractive, dead-looking yellow-brown in zone 4 to 6 winters
  - 'Winter Gem' - has the lightest green foliage color of all the Boxwoods, with new, relatively large foliage emerging lime-green on yellowish stems and maturing by mid-summer to medium green, with minimal leaf margin burn in winter; also the fastest growing of all the modern Boxwoods, and often needs to be sheared twice in a growing season if maintained in a formal shrub appearance or as a formal hedge; very popular in zones 4 and 5; 'Winter Gem' may actually be a selection of *Buxus microphylla var. koreana* 'Wintergreen'

- **Buxus sempervirens** - Common Boxwood
  - glossy, larger, dark green winter foliage is popular in southern regions with many cultivars, but usually only cold hardy from zones 6 to 8
  - *Buxus sempervirens* 'Vardar Valley' - the standard cold hardy cultivar for this species, which matures at 3' x 5' and is hardy through zone 5; very popular
  - Hybrids of *Buxus microphylla var. koreana* x *Buxus sempervirens* - the "Green Series" consists of Canadian hybrids of these 2 species, useful from zones 5 to 8; developed in Southern Ontario:
    - *Buxus* ‘Green Gem’ - 2' x 2'
    - *Buxus* ‘Green Mound’ - 3' x 3'
    - *Buxus* ‘Green Mountain’ - 5' x 3', naturally pyramidal, an alternative evergreen to replace the overused Dwarf Alberta Spruce (*Picea glauca* 'Conica'), which is very prone to disease and pest problems with age
    - *Buxus* ‘Green Velvet’ - 3' x 3', very popular in zone 5