

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

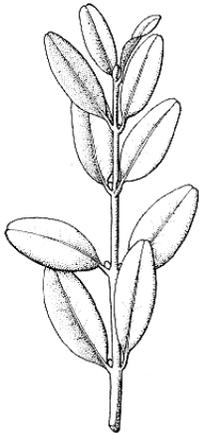
-small versions grow slowly to 2' tall x 2' wide, whereas larger versions mature after many years at 15' tall x 15' wide

-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 desiccation
-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

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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

