July 21, 2015

Dear Extension colleagues:

The Department of Plant Industry (DPI) would like to share some recent developments in our state with boxwood blight, the disease caused by the fungal pathogen Calonectria pseudonaviculata (syn. Cylindrocladium pseudonaviculatum). We were notified two weeks ago that several big box stores in the Charleston and Myrtle Beach areas were shipped boxwoods from an out-of-state nursery that subsequently tested positive for the disease. Although it is not regulated at the federal or state level, DPI considers boxwood blight to be a pest of concern and our goal is to prevent this disease from becoming established in the landscape here in South Carolina. DPI nursery inspectors visited each of the stores that received potentially infected plant material and were not able to detect any presence of the disease on remaining nursery stock. However, the majority of the boxwoods had already been sold, meaning they are now in the landscape.

It is possible that the warm weather has suppressed any symptoms of disease and as cooler weather approaches we may begin to see symptomatic, dying or dead boxwoods. We are asking for your assistance in detecting this disease if it is present in the landscape. If you happen to field calls from homeowners or landscapers, especially in the Charleston and Myrtle Beach areas, that are having issues with their boxwoods, pachysandra or sarcococca, it is very important that either an Extension agent or a DPI inspector investigate the situation as soon as possible. I am sure that we can coordinate visits, and if an agent is not available then we can assign one of our inspectors to cover the call. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you need assistance. DPI will handle any plants that are returned to the big box stores.

We have developed a checklist to aid in determining if diseased boxwoods need to be sampled. The disease cannot be identified from visual symptoms alone since there are other common diseases the present with similar symptoms. Samples can be sent to the Plant Problem Clinic at no charge as a Regulatory sample. It is important that the checklist be utilized to prevent our lab from being overwhelmed by samples of look-alike diseases. If you have questions about whether to pull a sample please contact Meg Williamson, Sherry Aultman or a DPI inspector and we will be glad to help.

We appreciate your assistance in managing this threat and sharing our informational brochure with your clients. You can find additional information on our website at: http://www.clemson.edu/public/regulatory/plant_industry/pest_nursery_programs/invasive_exotic_programs/pest_alerts/Diseases/boxblight.html.

Sincerely,

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BOXWOOD BLIGHT SAMPLE SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Pull a sample and submit as a Regulatory sample at no charge if the boxwood, pachysandra or sarcococca has:

_ leaf spots
_ straw-colored leaves
_ defoliation
_ black streaking or lesions on stems
_ small, white clusters of fungal spores

AND

this plant was:
_ purchased in the last 6 months
_ growing near recently-planted host material

The Plant Problem Clinic will be happy to process the sample for the regular fee of $10.00 if both of the above conditions are NOT met and the customer still wants to have an official diagnosis. Submit the sample as normal.