

BOXWOOD PSYLLID

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Fig 1 Cupping of boxwood foliage due to psyllid feeding



Fig. 2 Boxwood psyllid nymph; a white waxy secretion produced by the insect is visible along the edge of the abdomen

Boxwood psyllids are small insects that produce a distinctive cupping of leaves as the immature

stages (nymphs) remove sap from tender expanding foliage. They feed only on boxwood; the damage is especially noticeable on American boxwood.

These insects affect the appearance of the plant but are not a threat to plant health or vigor.

Boxwood psyllids overwinter as eggs inserted between the bud scales. The eggs begin to hatch as soon as the buds begin to open and new leaves expand. Nymphs remain sheltered within the cupped leaves, becoming adults in late May and early June. The adults will feed but do not cause noticeable damage. After mating, females will lay eggs under bud scales where they will remain until spring. There is a single generation each year.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS-

Do nothing- Psyllid damage is primarily aesthetic so light infestations will produce only scattered injury. Watch each spring because numbers can build over time.

Mechanical control- If practical, prune and destroy infested tips containing nymphs before mid-May when they become adults and lay eggs.

Insecticides – Low impact options include insecticidal soap or summer horticultural oil. They must be applied when new growth begins and require thorough spray coverage because they work by direct contact with the insects. There is no residual effect. Check several days after treatment to see if live nymphs are still present and treat again if necessary.

Residual insecticides – Products containing active ingredients such as acephate, cyfluthrin, cyhalothrin, permethrin, malathion, or spinosad can be sprayed on the foliage in early to mid-May to control high infestations of nymphs. Spraying after the leaves have fully expanded (after mid-late May) won't affect current damage but may help to reduce psyllid injury the following year.

Systemic insecticides – products containing the active ingredients dinotefuran or imidacloprid may be applied to the soil around boxwoods according to label directions. The insecticide is taken up by the roots and distributed throughout the plant in the sap. The application must be made 2 to 4 weeks before the psyllids begin to feed. Watch for mite infestations when using these products.