

**BOXWOOD NOTES FROM SESSION WITH MR. LYNN BATDORF**  
**SUNDAY 23 MAY 2010**  
**Park Committee Members**  
**Alice Kinter, Carol Coffin, Susan Kilborn**

**Book;** “ Boxwood Handbook’ by Lynn Batdorf can be ordered on line from The American Boxwood Society FOR \$25.

**Care:** 1 inch maximum of shredded hardwood mulch, not pine bark. If soil too acid, apply crushed Dolomitic limestone which is not as strong as regular limestone. The soil should have a ph of 6.8 to 7.5 ideally with 7.0 . Fertilize only in the fall. Keep ivy and other ground covers away. Boxwood should be watered in periods of drought, especially in July and August, and if under a tree. Never tie up boxwood, even after a heavy snowstorm such as we had this past winter.

**Pruning/Thinning:** English boxwood needs thinning to be healthy. American boxwood does not. Use clippers only, not anvil pruners. Cut straight across, not at an angle. Do not break stems by hand. Thin dense foliage (about 6’ long or less) to let air and light inside. No bare stems. Leave enough foliage on branches to protect from sun scald. Ideally you want a cloudlike billowy top. Taper slightly from bottom to top to allow light in the sides. The best time of the year to prune is December, but light pruning can be done any time of the year. It may take 3-5 years to return a damaged boxwood bush to normalcy.

**Planting;** The best time to plant boxwood is in October. Boxwood prefers light loamy soil. Roots of boxwood are very shallow and spread long distances. If trying to plant in clay soil, don’t make a bowl that holds water or the roots will rot. It is better to put compost and hardwood mulch on top and water. Boxwood must have healthy roots to survive. Boxwood is very difficult to transplant because of the shallow far reaching root system.

**English Boxwood vs. American Boxwood:** American boxwood is *Buxus sempervirens* ‘Arbvorescens’. English boxwood is *Buxus sempervirens* ‘Suffruticosa’. American boxwood is more leggy and not as dense, grows faster and reaches up to 20 feet, and it has a pointed leaf. English boxwood has rounded oval shaped leaves, sometimes notched at the tip of the leaf, is a more compact bush and grows much more slowly generally reaching up to 12 feet tall, 14 feet in diameter. All the boxwood that we inspected are English boxwood.

**Enemies:** The boxwood in the care of the Village does not have the funguses that have been a major problem of homeowners in our area. There is a small sucking insect that sometimes causes the leaves to curl, but this should be ignored unless serious. Mites cause a gray mottling of the leaves. Any dead areas should be removed. Each branch has its own roots so a problem in one branch would not necessarily occur in another branch.

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**Boxwood in front of Village Hall and by Post Office:** Boxwood bushes have dormant lateral leaf buds so besides growing at the tips new leaves can grow along branches and regenerate if enough air and light is provided. The boxwood in front of the Village Hall is top heavy and should be slowly pruned and thinned to lighten the branches. But if the branches are completely exposed without protection such as the boxwood bush by the ramp at the Post Office, the bush cannot be saved.

**Boxwood on Circle:** Our healthiest boxwood. They have been thinned and pruned every couple of years in December. In several places the pruning has been too severe. Moss underfoot indicates that the soil is very acidic and should be tested and limestone applied. Also all ivy and other growth should be removed and a light layer of hardwood mulch applied. If the brick sidewalk is replaced in this area it must be done completely by hand because of the shallow roots.

**Boxwood on Connecticut Avenue between W. Lenox and W. Melrose:** This boxwood belongs to the Village and is in bad shape in part because it is on a slope and the soil has washed away. It needs mulch and wire overtop or a cargo knit cloth to stabilize the mulch to keep it from washing down the hillside. Stumps should not be removed or the roots of nearby boxwood will be disturbed. It may need lime and fertilizer before mulching. At the top of the boxwood area, where the grass is growing, a permanent edge should be installed as the roots are being killed by edging. It would be helpful to install a 6" or more barrier at the sidewalk to protect this box from salt and help hold the mulch in place. .

**Testing the Soil:** For soil samples insert shovel 6-8" deep. Remove a wedge of soil. Take 6-8 samples in an area, dry them and mix together. American Plant Food will test soil for Ph without cost if a large sample is provided.

**Purchasing Boxwood:** Before accepting boxwood, inspect inside for leaf growth on stems and signs of disease. Also many nurseries grow boxwood with heavy dense foliage from over fertilization. Make sure there are no vertical roots. For purchasing boxwood, Mr. Batdorf recommends Saunders Brothers in Piney River, Virginia and Steve Southhall who has several farms in the area.