

Buxus, Boxwood

For functionality, few broadleaf evergreens approach the boxwoods. The name is synonymous with hedging, and the intricate parterres of many formal European gardens come to mind. Cultivars of *Buxus microphylla* and *B. sempervirens* fit numerous geographic and climatic niches. Boxwoods prefer loamy, loose, well-drained soils. Root systems are near the surface and should not be disturbed. Full sun or partial shade situations are suitable.

Buxus microphylla

Littleleaf Boxwood

Buxus microphylla is a compact, mounded-rounded, densely branched shrub. The 1/4- to 1-in.-long, oval leaves are medium green in summer and turn yellow, brown, or bronze in winter, especially in cold climates. It is less troubled by insects and diseases than *B. sempervirens*, Common Boxwood, but it is not as handsome in leaf or stature. Utilize for large masses or as accents in borders, rock gardens, and perennial gardens. The numerous cultivars lend themselves to specialized uses. Grows 3 to 4 ft. high and wide. Zones 6 to 8. Japan, Korea.

Cultivars and Varieties. var. *japonica*, although more common in the Southeast and Southwest, is adaptable in Zone 6. The 1/3- to 1-in.-long leaves are almost as broad as those of the species and they are a much darker green color. I have not observed severe discoloration of winter foliage in this variety. Appears more sun and shade adaptable than typical *Buxus microphylla*. Grows 3 to 6 ft. high and wide.

var. *koreana* is the true cold-hardy stalwart and will survive -20 to -25°F or lower (Zones 4 or 5). Leaves are smaller than those of the species, but other characteristics are the same. This variety is the more commonly found form of the plant.

Sheridan Hybrids resulted from crossing *Buxus microphylla* var. *koreana* and *B. sempervirens*, and the hybrids embody the best characteristics of the



Buxus microphylla var. *koreana* 'Wintergreen'

parents. 'Green Gem', 'Green Mound', 'Green Mountain', and 'Green Velvet' are compact forms of varying growth habits, with excellent dark green winter color reminiscent of that of *B. sempervirens* and cold hardiness paralleling that of var. *koreana*. Somewhat slow growing.

'Wintergreen' represents a seedling selection from var. *koreana* with smaller leaves and green winter color. The leaves are light green, but they hold color reasonably well, even in climates like that of Chicago.

Buxus sempervirens

Common, American, or English Boxwood

One of the most functional plants in garden history, it has been used for screens, hedges, and foundations in the great gardens of the world. In habit, Common Boxwood is a behemoth; specimens 15 to 20 ft. high and wide prospered in Cincinnati, Ohio, until the devastating freezes of 1976-77. Compared to the previous species, this boxwood offers neither outstanding cold nor heat tolerance. The 1/2- to 1-in.-long, 1/2-in.-wide



Buxus sempervirens, Common Boxwood