**The Box Tree Moth**

**Feasts on Boxwood Hedges**

**A newly invasive pest is causing defoliation and dieback on boxwood shrubs.**

**It was first discovered in Etobicoke in 2018.**

**With a lack of natural predators and parasites to keep populations in check, human intervention is needed to manage this landscape threat.**

**From a distance, some of the boxwood foliage may appear slightly yellowed as if lacking water or nutrients. As larval feeding continues the foliage then appears beige/brown (desiccated).**

**When the moth population is more established and the foliage consumed, the larvae will feed on branch tissues causing branch dieback and plant mortality.**

**Management**

**Boxwood shrubs should be physically inspected regularly by slowly pulling apart twigs and leaves and searching for signs of feeding damage, webbing, and clusters of yellowish eggs on the underside of leaves. Black dots start to show as the larval head capsule is forming. Eggs hatch in about 3 days.**

**Severely affected boxwoods can be rejuvenated if good plant health care measures are taken. First, by protecting the “healthy foliage” by using an insecticide. Second, by regular watering and periodic fertilizer applications.**

**There are four products which can be used to control this pest.**

**I personally use End-All and mix the concentrate with water. Boxwoods need to be thoroughly soaked with the solution. I chose this product because it is effective against eggs, larvae, pupae, and adult stages.**

**For persons considering the use of BTK (which is an ingestion bacteria), BTK has a short environmental persistence (3 – 7 days) which means that it cannot be considered a preventative measure. BTK is only effective when the larval feeding stage is present and not the other life stages.**

**After treatment with BTK, plants should be inspected within 5-7 days because the box tree moth has two or more generations in a year.**

**The other two insecticides available to the homeowner are Insecticidal Soaps and Horticultural Oil. Please read the labels and follow the directions on all products.**

**For further information please Google Boxwood Tree Moth – Canadian Food Inspection Agency**

**Article prepared by Peter Cox – Member – Thornhill Garden and Horticultural Society – August 18, 2023**