

Hedging - Box Alternatives

What Are The Alternatives To Box Hedging?

Box blights are fungal diseases which can attack all forms of box plants whether grown as clipped topiary plants, as border edging or as freestanding plants in a hedge. The fungus attacks the leaves and can cause severe dieback in hedges and topiary plants making them unsightly at best and mainly dead at worst. The spores of the fungus are spread by water splash and clippings being moved around the garden. All box infections are worst in moist conditions. So serious has this problem become in many established gardens that professional gardeners and landscape designers seldom now include box as a hedging plant in their designs especially in the home counties or wetter areas of the country where it is already prevalent. Rampant might be a better description.



Box blight effecting circle



Box blight effecting
centre circle



Box blight



Box blight effecting

However, since 2008, the situation has got even worse! The arrival of box tree moth in the UK began in that year. Last year there were over 800 sightings mainly in London and eastern England. The caterpillars from this moth live on, eat and infest only box plants. The green caterpillars can appear in profusion, are hard to control, and rapidly cause defoliations.

Preventative spraying is not really an option and the infestation is usually well established before you notice.

So, when you are forced to dig out and burn your box edging which has made a splendid feature around your borders, what do you plant instead to do the same job?

At least there are other alternatives to box when it comes to topiary. Yew or *Ligustrum ionandrum* can, in time, be grown, trained and clipped into shape. However, the solution is not so simple when it comes to box edging. *Buxus sempervirens* (common box) and *Buxus suffruticosa* (edging box) have one great attribute which many of the alternatives do not.

This is of course PRICE! Box are quick and easy to propagate while some of the most suitable alternatives are not. Nor are many growers yet geared up enough to offer large quantities of these plants either as cheap bare root cuttings or cheap liner plants in 7cm square pots.

It will take time for the market to adjust and we are not yet sure what the new favourite edging plants of the future will turn out to be? We are seriously considering creating a small new section on our website offering small plants in quantity for this purpose from the list outlined below. These will only be available as small liner sized plants in February to April each year. Some of the plants on the list take longer to propagate and are more difficult to propagate than box so some will always be more expensive.

The simplest and cheapest alternative to box may well be lavender with L. 'Hidcote' and L. 'Munstead' being the obvious choices for larger sized beds which need edging. The problem is that lavenders, even when clipped after flowering, are usually well past their best after five or so years and will again need replacing.



Lavandula 'Hidcote'

Lavandula 'Hidcote'



Lavandula 'Hidcote'



E.fortunei 'Emerald Gaiety'



E.fortunei 'Emerald 'n' Gold'



E.microphyllum pulchellum



E.microphyllum pulchellum
'Variegatus'



L. nitida 'Baggesens Gold'



L. nitida 'Baggesens Gold'



I. crenata 'Golden Gem'



I. crenata 'Golden Gem'



Teucrium fruticans



Teucrium fruticans



Teucrium x lucidrys



Teucrium x lucidrys

Santolina chamaecyparissus is quick and easy to grow but it does not alwa



Santolina
chamaecyparissus



Santolina
chamaecyparissus



Berberis latifolia



Berberis thunbergii
'Admiration'



Berberis thunbergii
'Bonanza'



Berberis thunbergii
'Golden Ring'



Berberis thunbergii
'Golden Ring'



Berberis thunbergii
'Starburst'



Osmanthus delavayi



Osmanthus delavayi



Osmanthus delavayi



Phillyrea angustifolia



Phillyrea angustifolia



Phillyrea angustifolia



Yew - Amazing



Yew - as ornate box-style



Yew - hedging



Yew!



P. 'Spring Sunshine'

P. 'Red Embers'



P. 'Red Embers'



R.officinalis 'Severn Sea'

Laurel Hedging - Video Tip

For larger hedges

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/ZnfmY1gtH0c?rel=0>

Camellias For Large Hedges - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/JcrW2KC4wfg?si=sJTsZNUwqzDARnP>

Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ

Telephone: +44 (0) 1209 860316 Fax: +44 (0) 1209 860011 Email: info@burncoose.co.uk

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