

BOX TREE MOTH

Not yet discovered in our local area but recently established in the UK and spreading our way, the caterpillars of the box tree moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) are yet another threat to the unfortunate box plant.



Why are they a problem?

Aside from a huge appetite for *Buxus sempervirens* – sufficient to kill the entire plant, this caterpillar appears not to be attractive to birds or other predators, making natural control impossible. With 3 generations a year and high tolerance of cold winter conditions there seems to be little stopping a full scale invasion.

How do I recognise them?

- By the damage they cause! Look for webbing and caterpillars anywhere that your box plants are showing irregular growth patterns – these could be the first areas being stripped of foliage by the caterpillar.
- As an adult – keep your eyes open during the day in case you disturb the rest of a moth with a 4cm wingspan looking rather like the one in this photo!
- As a caterpillar – the RHS description is as follows; newly hatched caterpillars are greenish-yellow, with black heads. Older caterpillars reach up to 4cm (1½in) in length and have a greenish/yellow body with thick black and thin white stripes along the length of the body.
- As an egg – gelatinous blobby clumps of yellowish eggs are hidden on the underside of undamaged box leaves.



What do I do if I think I have found one?

Small infestations can often be controlled with an insecticidal spray. Pyrethrum based products are often recommended. It may also be possible to buy parasites to apply to the area. Look for the appropriate Nemasys product to use in private garden situations. If the infestation develops in a larger problem the only recourse is to destroy the infected plants.

A note from the RHS

As part of our research the RHS would like to know where box tree moth has been seen. Please submit your records via our [box tree moth survey](#) (expected time to complete survey = two minutes).