



Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site

Sandburg Home Boxwood Trimming



Approach to Sandburg Home today with overgrown boxwood.



Approach to Sandburg Home when Carl Sandburg lived at Connemara.
Photo by June Glenn, Jr. 1946

The boxwood at Carl Sandburg Home are a focal point in the landscape. They line the drive across from the barn, and the approach to the Sandburg house. The photo on the left is taken from the same perspective as the historic photo on the right. See how the view has changed over time? We hope to restore a more open view of the Sandburg home and improve visibility along visitor walkways, while preserving the stately boxwood that have graced Connemara for well over a century.

There are about 70 species and many variety of boxwood. The species growing at Carl Sandburg Home are American boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*), English boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens* 'suffruticosa'), and Korean boxwood (*Buxus microphylla*).

Under favorable conditions, boxwood can live for hundreds of years. Many of the boxwood at Carl Sandburg Home were established circa 1850 and may be over 150 years old. These shrubs now show signs of age and decline. Many have hollow decaying stems and have become leggy with thinning foliage. Healthy boxwood have dense foliage throughout the length of their branches. In order to revitalize the boxwood at Carl Sandburg Home, it is necessary to prune dead and spindly branches, apply organic fertilizer, and control boxwood pests.

Boxwood respond well to heavy pruning. Though pruning results in a dramatic change in the appearance of a tree or shrub, the nearly leafless branches, when exposed to sunlight, will soon sprout numerous leafy sprigs along their length. The photo below illustrates the typical growth response exhibited by boxwood once stems receive light. The photo was taken recently at the George Washington Birthplace National Monument during a boxwood care training program presented by the Olmstead Center for Landscape Preservation, National Park Service.

Currently, the boxwood at the Sandburg Home have little foliage inside. By removing the outer overgrowth, the bare branches inside will develop new growth points and begin to fill with foliage from the inside. This will create stronger, healthier plants.



New interior growth on aggressively trimmed boxwood

Along with improving form and vigor, we seek to move the appearance of the landscape back in time to the Sandburg period. Everything was 50 years younger then, and 50 years smaller!

The park's buildings and trails are located in a natural setting. Please use good judgment and be aware of your surroundings as you may walk on uneven paths and encounter wildlife. For more information call 828-693-4178 or visit www.nps.gov/carl.