

Native Plant Information

Common Willows of Marin County

Key Vocabulary

Tomentose- densely matted woolly hairs

Glaucous- having a powdery or waxy coating that tends to rub off

Glabrous- free from hair, smooth

Entire Margins- a leaf that is smooth all the way around

Lanceolate- of a narrow oval shape tapering to a point at each end

Ob lanceolate- inversely lanceolate

Catkin- the reproductive part, 'flower'



Leaf Morphology



Male Catkin



Female Catkin

Willows are nothing short of amazing. Many of them are tough to identify and this fact sheet may help the observer to better identify them. Willows hybridize with one another, so that alone can make the identification process challenging. There are six known willow species throughout Marin County that can be found. Specifically, willows are a water-loving species that typically grow along streams, lagoons, lakes, reservoirs, meadows, bogs, fens, swamps, marshes, wetlands, wet ditches, seeps and springs. See below for a short list of valuable uses willows provide:

RESTORATION

- Grade control
- Bank stabilization via soil bioengineering
- Erosion control
- Native riparian vegetation which provides an increase in canopy cover, food supply, nutrient cycling and dissolved oxygen. Riparian vegetation also provides diversity of wildlife habitat, riparian complexity and migratory corridors and improved water temperatures.

CULTURAL¹

- Basket
- Medicine
- Dental
- Dyes
- Furniture
- Drums
- Hunting Traps
- Tools

MEDICINAL

- Aspirin (derived from salicylic acid found in willow bark)

LANDSCAPING

- Rooting hormones in bark for propagating cuttings (salicylic acid which assists in plant defenses and indolebutyric acid which stimulates root growth)²
- Non-living walls
- Outdoor furniture





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Common Name: Narrow-leaved Willow, Sandbar Willow

Family: Salicaceae

Latin Name: *Salix exigua*

Key Characteristics:

Lanky shrub 6'-12' tall (< 7 meters) with gray leaves that are about ¼" wide and 2"-5" long with very short petioles. The leaves are tomentose on the top and underside of its strappy leaves. Leaf margins are entire to sharply serrate. Twigs are brownish, silky. This willow flowers February-March, depending on elevation.



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Common Name: Red Willow

Family: Salicaceae

Latin Name: *Salix laevigata*

Key Characteristics:

Small tree, 10'-30' tall (< 15 meters) with light-green large, long lanceolate to elliptical leaves that are glaucous on the underside and shiny/glossy on topside with finely crenate margins. Relatively thick leaves that are broad at the base and taper to a long-tipped point. Twigs are red to yellow-brown, hairy, becoming glabrous. Bud scale margins are free, overlapping. The bark is reddish-brown with a rough texture (furrowed). New growth is red. This willow flowers from February through May, depending on elevation.



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Common Name: Arroyo Willow

Family: Salicaceae

Latin Name: *Salix lasiolepis*

Key Characteristics:

A very variable shrub or small tree, 10'-30' tall (< 10 meters). Grows in thickets. The bark is smooth and the twigs are yellowish to dark brown that are tomentose, becoming glabrous. Leaves are 2.5"-4" long and about 3/4" wide, glaucous on underside and shiny on topside. It has alternate, hairy, entire leaves that are lanceolate-elliptic to oblanceolate in shape with acute to obtuse-tipped points. In the spring, the catkins appear before the leaves. The leaves tend to be thick, leathery and irregular regarding a consistent leaf shape and margins per individual. This willow is used in phytoremediation in order to remove hydrocarbons from substrate. Typically the first to flower, this willow flowers from February through April, depending on elevation.



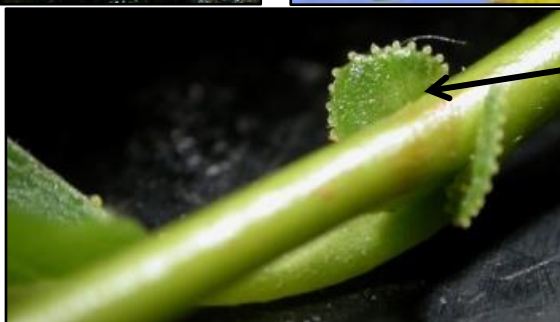
Common Name: Yellow Willow, Pacific Willow, Shining Willow

Family: Salicaceae

Latin Name: *Salix lucida var. lasiandra*

Key Characteristics:

Tall single-trunk tree, sometimes shrub that grows 15'-45' tall (< 10 meters). The leaves are lanceolate, acute base, thick and shiny topside with finely serrate margins and glaucous undersides. Looks very similar to the red willow except this willow has glandular stipules and petioles present. Twigs are brownish, glabrous. The bark is scaly and furrowed. Its catkins are bright yellow. This willow flowers from May to June, depending on elevation.



Glandular Stipules

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Common Name: Scouler's Willow, Fire Willow

Family: Salicaceae

Latin Name: *Salix scouleriana*

Key Characteristics:

Large shrub, often small slender single-trunk tree that grows about 32' tall (< 10 meters). Leaves are alternate, glabrous topside, glaucous undersides, obovate (spoon-shaped), 3"-5" long, mostly entire or irregularly serrate, edges rolled under and form a fan-like shape at the ends of twigs. Twigs are brownish, hairy becoming glabrous. This willow flowers from February to March, depending on elevation (grows no higher than 3,000') with catkins present before the leaves in spring.



Common Name: Sitka Willow

Family: Salicaceae

Latin Name: *Salix sitchensis*

Key Characteristics:

Large shrub or slender tree that typically grows only up to 24' tall (< 7 meters). The 2"-5" long alternate lanceolate to widely obovate leaves are tomentose on the undersides of the long, wide leaves about two to four times as long as they are wide with entire to finely serrate margins that are widest near the tip which comes to a point and rolled over near the base. Twigs are brownish, young twigs are dense and velvety-short hairy. This willow flowers from March to April and appear with or before the leaves.

References

- i <http://www.cloverleaffarmherbs.com/willow/>
- ii <http://deepgreenpermaculture.com/diy-instructions/home-made-plant-rooting-hormone-willow-water/>
- iii <http://www.laspilitas.com/nature-of-california/plants/596--salix-exigua>
- iv www.yerbabuenanursery.com
- v http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi/img_query?enlarge=0000+0000+1213+0586
- vi <http://www.calflora.net/bloomingplants/arroyowillow.html>
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- viii http://calphotos.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/img_query
- ix http://www.calflora.org/cgi-bin/species_query.cgi?where-taxon=Salix+lucida+ssp.+lasiandra
- x http://www.nwplants.com/business/catalog/sal_sco.html
- xi <http://web.pdx.edu/~maserj/ESR410/Salixsitchensis.html>

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