

Golden Willow



Golden Willow (*Salix alba* 'Vitellina')

General Description

A large low-branching tree forming a broad round-topped crown with slender, drooping branches. Brought over from Europe and central Asia. Widely planted as a yard tree. Its branches shed easily throughout the season and make it somewhat of a nuisance tree in yards.

Leaves and Buds

Bud Arrangement - Alternate.

Bud Color - Yellow with a silky down.

Bud Size - 1/5 inch long, rounded at apex, and flattened against the twig with a single, cap-like bud scale.

Leaf Type and Shape - Simple, lanceolate, acuminate-tipped, and cuneate.

Leaf Margins - Finely-serrate.

Leaf Surface - Smooth above, glaucous and silky beneath.

Leaf Length - 1½ to 4 inches.

Leaf Width - 1/4 to 1/2 inch.

Leaf Color - Bright-green on top, silvery below.

Flowers and Fruits

Flower Type - Catkins 3/4 to 2½ inches long.

Flower Color - Yellowish-green.

Fruit Type - Seed attached to cottony hairs.

Fruit Color - Brownish-white.

Form

Growth Habit - Large, spreading to round crown.

Texture - Fine, summer; medium, winter.

Crown Height - 40 to 55 feet.

Crown Width - 40 to 55 feet.

Bark Color - One year old twigs are yellow, turning light-brown with age. Tannish-brown, ridged and furrowed, corky bark.

Root System - Fibrous spreading.

Environmental Requirements

Soils

Soil Texture - Performs best on deep, moist loams, or along stream beds and wetlands.

Soil pH - Adaptable to high pH soils, 5.5 to 8.0.

Windbreak Suitability Groups - 1,1K,2, 2K, 2H.

Cold Hardiness

USDA Zone 2.

Water

Does well in moist sites and survives severe flooding. Often dies back during periods of extended drought.

Light

Full sun to partial shade.

Uses

Conservation/Windbreaks

Medium to tall tree for farmstead and field windbreaks and riparian plantings.

Wildlife

Dense shrub form provides cover to many wildlife species. Buds and twigs are used by upland game and song birds. Fur-bearing mammals feed on buds, bark and wood. Small mammals feed on foliage and catkins. Hoofed browsers feed on twigs and foliage.

Agroforestry Products

Wood - Fuelwood, pallets, crates, furniture, cooperage, woodenware and carving.

Medicinal - Early Americans and Europeans used an extract for headaches, fever, gout, and pain. Willow is a source of salicin which is broken down to salicylic acid, the main component in aspirin.

Urban/Recreational

Very attractive and functional shade, windbreak and accent tree. Use near water features in landscape. A messy tree if used as a yard specimen, due to twig drop.

Cultivated Varieties

Flame Willow (*Salix alba* 'Flame') - Dense form, reddish twigs.

Redstem Willow (*S. alba* 'Chermesina') - Reddish new twigs, less spreading than the species.

Siberian White Willow (*S. alba* 'Sericea') - Silvery-gray hairy leaves.

Weeping Golden Willow (*S. alba* 'Tristis') - Popular weeping specimen tree in yards, but very messy tree due to twig drop.

Related Species

Peach-leaved Willow (*Salix amygdaloides*)

Laurel Willow (*Salix pentandra*)

Pests

Aphids can be a serious problem on willows.