

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.