

SITKA WILLOW

Salix sitchensis Sanson ex Bong.

Plant symbol = SASI2

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center

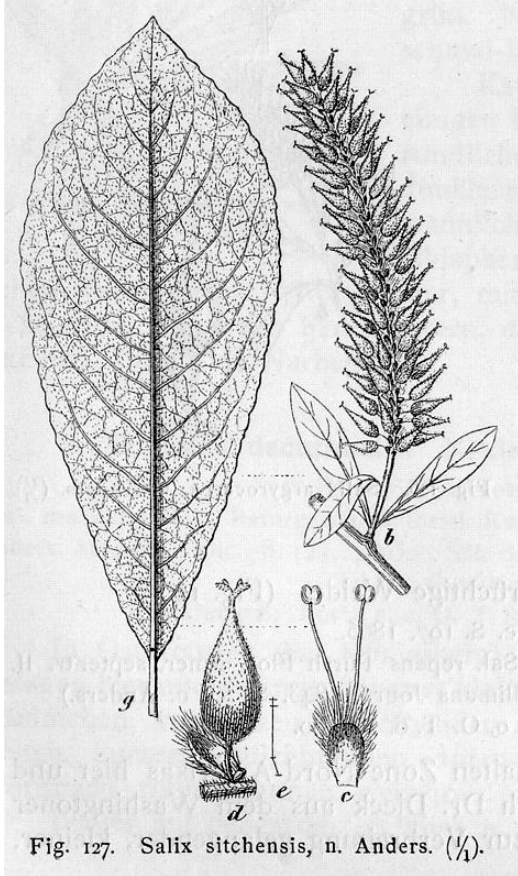


Fig. 127. *Salix sitchensis*, n. Anders. (1/4).

Handbuch der Laubholzkunde (1889)
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Alternative Names

satin willow, silky willow

Uses

Ethnobotanic: The inner bark was dried, grounded into a powder and then added to cereal for use in making bread. Willow branches and bark was used for making ropes for nets, tying, and bending. The Straits Salish used the bark to make a gray dye for mountain goat wool (Pojar & MacKinnon 1994). The Haida used the spring catkins or pussy willows of this species as decoration (Ibid.). The Indians used the wood and twigs in drying fish, stretching skins, and basket making (Viereck & Little 1972).

Medicinal: Willows are the source of the natural precursor to aspirin, salicylic acid, found in leaves and bark (Pojar & MacKinnon 1994). The bark can be pounded and applied to wounds as a healing agent (Moerman 1998). An infusion of the stems has been used in the treatment of stomach complaints (Ibid.).

Conservation: Sitka willow is used in forested riparian buffers to help reduce stream bank erosion, protect aquatic environments, enhance wildlife, and increase biodiversity.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

Description

General: Willow Family (Salicaceae). *Salix sitchensis* is a large shrub or small tree, six to twenty-five feet high. The leaves are alternate, oblanceolate or narrowly ovate, two to five inches long, and usually sharp-pointed. The flowers appear before or with the leaves, on short leafy shoots, males are five centimeters long, and the females are eight centimeters long (Pojar & MacKinnon 1994). The bark is smooth, slightly furrowed, and scaly.

Distribution: *Salix sitchensis* is native to stream banks from southern Alaska to southwestern Oregon (Viereck & Little 1972). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

Adaptation

Sitka willow is found on or near lake shores, wetland margins, forest edges, wet openings, and clearings at low to middle elevations. This species prefers damp, heavy soil but will succeed in most soils. It grows best in sunny locations but will tolerate some shade.

Establishment

Propagation by Seed: Seeds must be surface sown as soon as they are ripe in late spring. Seeds are viable for only a few days and the maximum storage period is four to six weeks with germination rates dropping off fast after ten days at room temperature (Dirr & Heuser 1987). Willow seeds have no dormancy and germinate within twelve to twenty-four hours after falling on moist ground (Ibid.). Seedbeds must be kept moist until seedlings are well established.

Propagation by cuttings: Sitka willow can be propagated through hardwood cuttings that can be

collected and prepared for insertion when they are well ripened, from November to March. Cuttings seven to ten inches long and a half to one inch thick are initially stuck in the ground at close spacing and lifted after one year (Durr & Heuser 1987). Willow cuttings have a rooting percentage of ninety to one-hundred percent without the use of rooting hormones (Ibid.).

Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

Somewhat available in native plant nurseries within its area of distribution.

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