

# THE WILLOW TREE



Willow Tree

## WHAT ARE WILLOWS?

Willows are trees and shrubs in the family Salicaceae. Willow trees like to grow by the edge of streams, where there is a lot of available water. Many willow trees are native to California and thrive on the state's temperate climate.

## IDENTIFYING A WILLOW

Willows have short trunks and long, narrow branches and leaves.



### Willow Roots

Willows have pink roots that can usually be seen growing in the stream in large clusters.



### Willow Leaves

Willows have narrow, smooth leaves with a rough-toothed edge. Leaves are usually three times longer than they are wide.



### Willow Catkins

Willows catkins are a cylindrical cluster of more than 100 willow flowers that are yellow to pale-green.

## THE BANK STABILIZING POWER OF WILLOW ROOTS!

The willow tree is a hardy plant that can quickly root along bare stream banks. The willow roots secure the soil and prevent bankside erosion. The roots also signal to other plants to start rooting too! With the bank stabilizing power of willows, stream banks left bare after a disturbance, like a wildfire, quickly re-vegetate and can once again provide shade and shelter for the animals living in and around the stream.



## THE HUMAN - WILLOW RELATIONSHIP

Willow trees have been respectfully harvested and used by native people of California for hundreds of years.



### Structural Material

The stems and branches of willows are traditionally used to weave baskets and make tools.



### Water Indicator

Since willows establish on the banks of freshwater streams, they are seen as nature's signal that fresh water is nearby.



### Medicinal Treatment

The bark from willow trunks and branches are steeped in hot water to treat various ailments and are also used to make aspirin.



The Watershed Stewards Program (WSP) is dedicated to improving watershed health by actively engaging in restoration science, civic service, and community education while empowering the next generation of environmental stewards.

A program of the California Conservation Corps, Watershed Stewards Program is one of the most productive programs for future employment in the environmental field. Watershed Stewards Program is administered by CaliforniaVolunteers, the Office of the Governor, and sponsored by AmeriCorps and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.