

Willow

About willow

There are a few different types of willow, including goat, crack, white, grey and osier. Goat, grey and osier willows grow up to around 10m whilst the white and crack willows can grow up to 25m. White willow is the typical 'weeping' willow and is the largest willow species.

Generally, dried willow will burn well and makes good firewood and charcoal. Crack willow and osier willow are used for weaving and basket making. Osier willow is also used for decontamination of land. Aspirin is made from a compound found in the bark of willows.

Both grey and goat willow provide food for the caterpillars of clearwing moths and are the main food plant for the purple emperor butterfly. White willow provides food for moth caterpillars, including the eyed hawk-moth, red underwing and willow ermine and its branches are good roosting and nesting sites for birds. The catkins provide an early nectar and pollen source for insects and the trees are important for birds that are foraging on caterpillars and insects.

Willow at the Boating Lake



Identifying willow

#1 Location – willows grow in woodlands, hedgerows and scrub, usually in damper places near streams, canals and lakes.



Grey willow buds

#2 Buds – greenish-brown, alternate and hairless. The buds of grey and goat willow will be fluffy inside.

#3 Bark and trunk – becomes vertically fissured; willow easily regrows when it has been cut or damaged so the trunk will often be mutli-stemmed.



Goat willow flowers

Where to see willow trees in Torfaen:

Pontypool Park;
Riverside Meadow, Pontypool;
Boating Lake, Cwmbran

Mature bark

