

Silky Willow Tree

Salix sericea

The Silky Willow is a plant native to Pennsylvania, predominantly shrub-like, and common in swamps, bogs, low woods, and along stream banks. The species has very good wildlife value in wetlands and damp environments. The shrub is also a plant of Special Value to Native Bees as recognized by The Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Silky willows are a favorite for natural fencing and barriers in gardens. Please keep in mind that silky willow seedlings can be a favorite of browsing white-tailed deer and will require a chicken-wire cage for the first several years. See "Follow-Up Care" in paragraph below.

Silky willows require full to partial sun and grow in well-drained moist soils, although part shade is preferable. Don't forget to water the plant well after planting. When mulching around the tree, do not pile mulch right against the trunk. Allow at least 2 inches of bare ground space to prevent decay and only use native plant bark mulch in its natural colors (no dyes added). Dyed wood mulch does not break down to enrich the soil. Instead, it leaches the dye and its contaminants into the soil, harming or even killing beneficial soil bacteria, insects, earthworms, and sometimes the tree itself.

Silky willows cannot be planted near black walnut trees if you happen to have one on your property. They cannot tolerate the allelopathic nature of the black walnut tree as the walnut tree's juglone toxin production attempts to stunt the growth of other trees nearby.

Regarding fertilization of newly planted trees – **DON'T!** For at least the first year, their nutrient needs will be minimal. During the first year, **they are establishing their root systems**, and fertilizer (which stimulates stems and leaves) will not be appropriate. In fact, fertilizer is never really required for these plants unless they are suffering from some disease.

Provide follow-up care. Silky willows like moist soil and should be watered at least once a week during the first year after planting. It can be watered less often during periods of rain but more often during hot, windy weather. Continue watering until late November as lower temperatures require less-frequent watering. Additional controls such as fencing or repellents are recommended for areas with high deer populations. For example, when planting new trees or shrubs you may want to protect them temporarily with small cages taller than the plant to prevent the deer from "tasting" them before they have had a chance to grow. Another way to deter the deer in lieu of cages is deer repellent. Here are two different products that have been proven to be fairly successful:

1. Plantskydd Repellent – a pre-mixed liquid that contains environmentally safe ingredients, and long-term protection when sprayed directly on plants.
2. Deer Stopper – a highly effective but more expensive product that needs to be spray-applied every 30 days. Works by smell and taste, will not wash off, and is pleasant to use, odor free.

Botanical Name	Salix sericea
Plant Type	Deciduous Mid-size Shrub
Mature Size	6-12 feet tall, 6-12 feet wide
Sun Exposure	Full sun to full shade
Soil Type	Acidic soils; loam, clay, or sand that stays wet and moist
Soil Moisture	Moist to wet