

Pussy Willow (*Salix caprea*)

The Pussy Willow is a deciduous shrub or small tree, reaching a height up to 33 feet. The leaves are 3–12 cm long and roughly 2–8 cm wide, broader than most other willows.

The flowers are soft silky, and silvery catkins are produced in early spring before the new leaves appear; the male and female catkins are on different plants (dioecious). The male catkins mature yellow at pollen release, the female catkins mature pale green.

The Latin specific epithet *caprea* means “goat”. This, and the other common name goat willow, probably derive from the first known illustration of the species in Hieronymus Bock's 1546 *Herbal*, where the plant is shown being browsed by a goat.

The Pussy Willow occurs both in wet/damp environments, such as riverbanks and lake shores, and in drier sites, wherever bare soil becomes available due to ground disturbance. Willows in general are not favored by most Urban Foresters, many problems are associated with them, but they do well in those problem wet areas and should be planted sparingly.