



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Plant Materials Program

# Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow

*Salix sericea* Marshall

A Conservation Plant Release by USDA NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, East Lansing, MI



*Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow*

The U.S.D.A-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources released a tested ecotype of silky willow for the Midwest and Great Lakes Region in April, 2003.

## Description

Riverbend Germplasm silky willow is an erect, multi-branched, native shrub that grows to 12 feet tall. It has a thick canopy of lanceolate, fine-toothed leaves that grow to 5 inches long. These are dark green and smooth above, and glaucous (white) and sericeous (silky) beneath. The twigs are hairless, light green to brown in color and brittle at the base. Catkins are precocious.

## Source

One hundred twenty collections of various shrub-type willow species were assembled from Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin in 1992. A collection consisted of approximately fifty 12-inch woody cuttings taken from a single healthy willow shrub or colony of shrubs with like characteristics growing in close proximity. Cuttings were planted in individual pots and placed in the greenhouse for three months. Eight plants were selected from each accession and transplanted into an initial study area on the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center. Survival, vigor, spread, insect resistance, tillering, height, canopy width and canopy density data were collected over a three-year period from 1994-1996. In 1998, 16 accessions were selected for inclusion in an advanced Center trial. Most of these and additional

accessions were placed in off-center field trails located in Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan.

Center and off-center plantings were established as replicated research trials. 'Streamco' purple osier willow and 'Bankers' dwarf willow were used as standards of comparison. Survival, height, spread, canopy width, and canopy density data were taken on the accessions in the advanced trials from 1998 through 2000. Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow was selected for its excellent canopy, density, growth, and overall appearance.

Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow is unaltered. It is a selection from naturally occurring germplasm. Riverbend Germplasm was determined "OK to release" when evaluated for environmental impact using the criteria adopted by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Program.

## Conservation Uses

Riverbend Germplasm silky willow is intended for use in streambank/shoreline restoration and riparian corridors.

## Area of Adaptation and Use

This species range is throughout the eastern United States from Georgia northward. The anticipated areas of use are the Great Lakes and Midwest regions. This species inhabits moist soils on the borders of lakes, streams, ditches, and other low areas.

## Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow roots well from dormant hardwood cuttings. Dormant cuttings 18-24" long and 1/2-3/4" in diameter can be planted at three to five ft. spacing. Planting can be done in the spring when soil conditions allow. Insert dormant cuttings vertically so that 2/3 of the cutting is below ground and 1/3 above ground. Root and shoot formation will start within a few weeks after planting depending on weather conditions.

## Ecological Considerations

No economically important insect or disease problems have been observed on Riverbend germplasm silky willow.



*Row of Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow*

### **Seed and Plant Production**

Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow is propagated vegetatively. Dormant cuttings can be harvested from plants anytime after leaf drop in the fall. Stems can be cut into sections 18-24" long for dormant cuttings. Keep cuttings moist until they are placed in the field.

### **Availability**

A Generation 0 (G0) cutting block is being maintained by the USDA-NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center. Dormant cuttings are available to commercial growers for increase purposes.

*For more information, contact:*  
Rose Lake Plant Materials Center  
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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov/>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>>

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