



Willow (Botanical)

Alison Syme

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Haunters of waterways and guardians of hedgerows; jewels of the garden and common companions in the fields: willows are at once the most poetic and practical of plants. For millennia they have played a key role in cultures across the northern hemisphere, forming baskets, furniture, fences and walls; treating illnesses; and becoming objects of artistic celebration in Monet's paintings and Shakespeare's tragedies. The genus *Salix* is now increasingly used for soil stabilization and biofuel, highlighting willows' continued importance in the present day.

Willow tells the rich tale of this many-sided plant, exploring its presence in literature, art and human history. Linked with life and death, grief and joy, toil and play, necessity and ornament, the willow has, in different times and places, functioned as a mirror of and participant in almost every facet of human existence.

Although willows have been put to manifold practical uses, Alison Syme argues powerfully that we must also heed their poetic lessons: willows have much to teach us about living, dying and loving, hybridizing and enriching our world and protecting the environment.

This well-illustrated book leads us from Monet's willows to Tang poetry, and from uses in medicine to environmental protection, in a seamless account of the special place this tree holds in world culture. Willow will appeal to anyone interested in gardens, the environment or the cultural history of plants.

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