

*Chilopsis linearis*

[Synonyms : *Bignonia linearis*, *Chilopsis glutinosa*, *Chilopsis lineari*, *Chilopsis linearis* var. *glutinosa*, *Chilopsis linearis* var. *originaria*, *Chilopsis saligna*]

**DESERT WILLOW** is an evergreen (deciduous in some areas) shrub or tree. Native to south-western North America it has willow-like leaves and showy streaked/tinged lilac-red (and sometimes yellow-spotted), white flowers with a violet-like fragrance.

It is also known as Desert catalpa, Flowering willow, Flowing willow, *Mimbre* (Spanish), and Ocean willow.

The flowers are pollinated by bees.

*Linearis* means ‘narrow and/or parallel sided’.

Its growth in desert regions is an indication that for some months of the year water is nearby below ground.

The versatility of desert willow is particularly apparent among members of the North American Cahuilla Indian tribe of southern California who ate the flowers and bean-like brown fruit pods. The tree itself also provided sought after shade from the sun and according to records its shade was usually considered to be a desirable camp site.

Thin branches, stripped, provided the Havasupai tribe with the necessary material for their distinctive coil basketry. Long branches were used by the Cahuilla like poles for harvesting fruit beyond their reach.

The Cahuilla valued the bark as this was not only made into clothing but also yielded fibre for making their nets.

Locally the dried flowers and fruit pods are sometimes used to make a tea.

Thick branches have been used for fencing – and the soft wood has also provided fuel. The orchid-like flowers have been sold in local markets and today the plant is cultivated as an ornamental, a screen and/or a windbreak.

Medicinally, herbalists locally have recommended an infusion of the dried flowers for easing some heart problems and as a remedy for coughs.