

Salix caprea

[Synonyms : *Salix bakko*, *Salix coetanea*, *Salix hultenii*]

GOAT WILLOW is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to Europe it has soft bright silvery-yellow catkins.

It is also known as *Bedmishk* (Urdu), *Bedmuskk* (Hindi, Punjabi), Black sally, Common sallow, Florist's willow, Goat sallow, Goose-and-goslings, Goose-and-gubblies, Goose chicks, Goslings, Gosling tree, Great round-leaved sallow, Great sallow, *Helygen Grynddail Fwyaf* (Welsh), *Katwilg* (Dutch), Lamb's tails, Palm, Palmer, Palm sallow, *Palm-Weide* (German), Palm willow, Pussy willow, *Sälg* (Swedish), *Saliko kapra* (Esperanto), Sallow, Sally, Sally withy, *Sal-Weide* (German), Saugh, Saugh tree palmer, *Vrba jiva* (Czech), *Waterwilg* (Dutch), and Willow; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of celibacy, and forsaken love.

Its profuse pollen and nectar is attractive to bees.

Caprea is derived from Latin *caper* (he-goat) meaning 'of goats' with reference to the past use of the leaves as goat fodder.

In Britain the female tree is often called Pussy willow because of its attractive catkins.

The burnt wood provided a good charcoal that was particularly for gunpowder.

Palm Sunday crosses distributed in Christian churches today in Britain are often made of willow (generally from the male goat willow), but in past centuries the box tree (*Buxus sempervirens*) or the yew (*Taxus baccata*) were used. The tradition of the 'palm' crosses was preceded by use of the willow on Palm Sunday processions when the tree was chosen to represent the leaves strewn in Jesus' path as he made his way to Jerusalem. The choice of willow in more northern climates may be because for Christians it symbolizes Christ's gospel. Or it may stem either from the fact that they were used by the Israelites when celebrating the Feast of the Tabernacle or the tradition that when the Jews wept in remembrance of their native land they hung their harps on willow. The goat willow did attract one particular superstition connected with its use as a Palm Sunday cross and that was that it brought bad luck if it was brought inside the house before that Christian celebration.

In contrast in Ireland travelling with a goat willow rod (or sally rod) brought luck.

It is this tree to which the famous English playwright, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), refers in *As You Like It* – its unlikely presence in the forest of Arden explained by its traditional use for 'palm' crosses as mentioned earlier.

.....for look here what I found on a palm-tree:

Goat willow is an emblem of the Scottish Cumming clan.

The tough and smooth, white wood is still used for making hoops, fences and hurdles, and it also provides a source of tannin and salicin (the latter used as an alternative to quinine, *Cinchona officinalis*).

Medicinally, the leaves have been used to treat fever and the flowers have been an ingredient in remedies for headaches. In India the flowers also have a reputation in some areas as an aphrodisiac.

It is the birthday flower for 22nd May.