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Salix viminalis

[Synonyms : *Salix longifolia*, *Salix pseudolinearis*, *Salix rossica*, *Salix rufescens*, *Salix semiviminalis*, *Salix serotina*, *Salix splendens*, *Salix strobilacea*, *Salix veriviminalis*, *Salix viminalis* var. *semiviminalis*, *Salix viminalis* subsp. *veriviminalis*, *Salix virescens*]

OSIER is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to Europe and north-eastern Asia (particularly the Himalayas) it has yellow catkins.

It is also known as *Bandweide* (German), *Baond-Pil* (Danish), Basket willow, Common osier, *Hanfweide* (German), *Helygen Wiail* (Welsh), Hemp willow, *Kopfweide* (German), *Korbweide* (German), *Korgpil* (Swedish), *Korgvide* (Swedish), *Koripaju* (Finnish), *Osier blanc* (French), *Ôsyi* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Saoud* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Saule des vanniers* (French), *Vetrice* (Italian), *Vime* (Portuguese), *Vimeiro* (Portuguese), *Vimine* (Italian), *Vrba košíkářská* (Czech), Wilger, Withe, Withy, and Wyth; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of frankness.

Viminalis is derived from Latin *vimen* (osier, withe, twig) meaning ‘slender or twiggy’ with reference to the shoots.

The ancient Greeks dedicated the plant to Hecate who was goddess of witchcraft.

According to European superstition osier was supposed to have been used as the binding on witches’ broomsticks.

Even recently osier beds (or ‘holts’) were a familiar sight in England and this species particularly was popular for making hoops, hampers and baskets, as well as other domestic objects. Rods from osier have also been driven in to support riverbanks and used to make coverts for wild birds.

The famous English poet and playwright, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) refers to osiers two or three times. One of these is in his poem *The Passionate Pilgrim* reads

.....to thee I’ll constant prove;
Those thoughts to me like oaks, to thee like osiers bow’d,
Study his bias leaves,

Osier was introduced to North America for wickerwork.

It is the birthday flower for 31st July.