

Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rose Lake Plant Materials Center, and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announce the release of a tested ecotype of silky willow (*Salix sericea* Marshall) for the Midwest and Great Lakes regions.

As a tested release, this plant will be released as Riverbend Germplasm Silky Willow and been assigned the NRCS accession number 9069052.

The release is justified because existing commercial sources of shrub willows native to the Midwest and Great Lakes have not been tested for their usefulness in streambank/shoreline stabilization or riparian corridors. No known commercial cultivars of silky willow have been released at this time.

Ecotype 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.

Method of Selection

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 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 trials were established in 4' plant plots in a randomized complete block design with four replications. '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 advance 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.

Anticipated Conservation Use

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

Availability of Plant Materials

Generation 0 (G0) rooted cuttings are being maintained by the USDA-NRCS Rose Lake Plant Materials Center and are available to commercial growers for increase purposes.

Propagation

Riverbend Germplasm silky willow roots well from both hardwood and softwood cuttings.



Anticipated Area of Adaptation

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.



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For More Information

Visit the NRCS Plant Materials Program website to learn more about using plants to address conservation problems.

<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

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