

# Black Willow

(*Salix nigra*)

## Willow Family – Salicaceae

Black willow is a small tree that is valued as a buffer tree in wetland areas, stabilizing the banks and preventing shoreline erosion. The long, narrow leaves are finely saw-toothed and slightly curved to one side. There are male and female trees with drooping catkins on the male in early spring.

### Parts Used

inner bark, male flower catkins



### Taste

Like aspirin, willow bark tastes bitter, is dry, and astringent.

### Constituents

The inner bark of black willow contains salicin, the precursor to salicylic acid which is formed upon ingestion. Salicylic acid has antipyretic (reduces fever) and anti-inflammatory properties, leading to its use to treat pain, inflammation, and fever. Salicylic acid lacks the antiplatelet properties that aspirin has (Bone and Mills, 2013) and unlike aspirin, it is soothing to the stomach rather than irritating (Wood, 2011). It also contains tannins and flavonoids (Kuhn and Winston, 2008).

### Traditional Uses

Willow has traditionally been used as an anti-inflammatory and analgesic to reduce fevers, aches and pains, and inflammation. It can be used for arthritis, mild headaches, gout, and aches associated with colds and influenza by decocting as a tea or as a tincture. Use two parts water to one part herb, bring to a gentle boil, reduce

heat, and simmer for 20-30 minutes. It was also used to wash wounds and poulticed on sore joints and muscle pain. (Kuhn & Winston, 2008).

### Wildlife Uses

It provides cover for wildlife and nesting habitat for small birds. White-tailed deer, rabbits, and small mammals feed on the bark, stems, and twigs (Martin, Zim, and Nelson, 1951). It also attracts a number of insects including commas, viceroy, mourning cloaks and a number of other butterflies that feed on their leaves (Tallamy, 2007).

### References

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