

# Plants for Solving Resource Problems

## ABERDEEN SELECTION of LAUREL WILLOW

**S**pecies: *Salix pentandra*  
Common Name: Laurel Willow

Plant Symbol: SAPE  
Accession Number: 9005049

**Source:** The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Plant Materials Center at Aberdeen, Idaho received the original plant material from the Plant Materials Center in Rose Lake, Michigan. It was collected in the upper Midwest from naturalized stands of European lineage.

**Site Information:** This plant is native to central and western Europe where it has been cultivated for many centuries. Another common name is Bay Willow. Both common names refer to the similarity of the leaf to that of the Bay Laurel tree.

**Method of Selection:** Selected from a collection of potential windbreak plants assembled and evaluated at the Plant Materials Center from 1981 through 1996. Laurel willow has been tested at off-center locations near Mountain Home, Idaho and Winnemucca, Nevada. This accession was selected for its beauty, hardiness, appropriate growth form for windbreaks, and natural range of adaptability. This accession shows great promise for use throughout the Intermountain West when used in irrigated windbreaks and for landscaping.



Laurel Willow

**Description:** Introduced from Europe during the past three centuries, Laurel willow has lustrous dark green foliage. The dark green, shiny leaves are 2 to 5 inches long and very attractive. The bark on the fine twigs and the stems is green to yellow green and gray on the older trunks. It requires deep, moist soils or supplemental irrigation. It is a medium to tall shrub with a dense round top, symmetrical crown and multiple trunks. Laurel willow grows to heights of 20-40 feet (6-12 meters) with average canopy coverage of 15-25 feet (4-8 meters).

**Use:** The potential uses of Laurel willow are for wind erosion control, diversity and beautification. Its fibrous root system and wide canopy cover make it an excellent plant for soil stabilization. The moderately dense stem and leaf pattern makes this an excellent plant for windbreaks. It is recommended for use in interior rows of multiple-row windbreaks, in a single row or twin-row windbreaks where an evergreen is not needed or desired, for landscaping, and to provide nesting and roosting habitat for birds.

**Insect and Disease Problems:** No problems have been observed with insects or diseases which could affect the survival or appearance of this plant.

**Environmental Considerations:** Laurel willow is not intended for use in natural wetlands or riparian areas. Since it is an introduced plant from Europe, it is not an appropriate component in native plant communities. In riparian areas, stems cut by beaver and broken stems may spread this plant to areas beyond the landowner's control. The released material is all from female plants.

**Potential Area of Adaptation:** The range of adaptation is very broad because the plant is expected to be used under managed conditions where annual rainfall is high (at least 22 inches per year) or where irrigation water is available. It is tolerant of very cold weather and adapted for use in windbreaks and landscaping throughout the Intermountain West. It also should perform well in the northern Great Plains and upper Midwest.

**Potential Soil Adaptation:** Deep or moderately deep loams, sandy loams, gravelly loams, well-drained to somewhat poorly drained soils.

**Harvesting and Planting:** This plant is reproduced using cuttings. Cuttings should be made during the period from late fall to early spring when the plants are dormant and have no leaves. Branches from 0.5 to 2 inches in diameter make excellent cuttings.

All of the small side branches should be removed, as well as the upper part that is less than 0.25 inches in diameter. Cuttings can be from 3 to 6 feet long. Cuttings should be stored under refrigeration until spring, or they can be planted immediately. The key to successful planting is to get the bottom of the cutting as deep into the soil as possible. A good rule of thumb is to place at least 2/3 of the cutting in the ground and more if possible. Where irrigation water is provided, planting deep and watering deep are essential to long term survival. If the cuttings have been stored for a long period prior to planting, soaking the lower ends (all that will be in the ground) in water 1 to 4 days will speed up the rooting process. The use of root promoting hormones is not required. The scarring or cutting of the planted portion is not recommended and may hurt the plant.

**Parent Plant Maintenance:** Parent plants are maintained at:

USDA-NRCS, Aberdeen PMC  
P.O. Box 296  
Aberdeen, ID 83210  
Phone: (208) 397-4133

Cuttings from Laurel willow will be made available to nurseries. Nurseries may establish their own parent plants for long-term production of cuttings.

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