

Recommendations of maintenance of willow living structures & plantings

1. About the willows

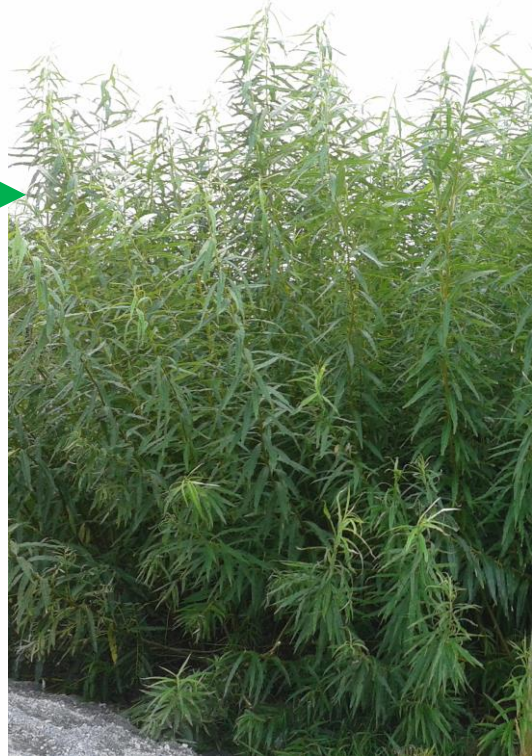
The following willows will fit for living structures:

- 🌿 common osier (*Salix viminalis*), it is also most commonly used;
- 🌿 purple willow (*Salix purpurea*);
- 🌿 almond willow (*Salix triandra*);
- 🌿 hybrids of different willow species.

All of them are shrubs that naturally distributed in our region. For living structures, it is easier to use selected or bred material, because the rods are longer, straighter, more flexible and less branching. Usually such plants are grown in plantations where it is possible to obtain large amount of uniform plant material.

For establishment of plantings additionally following willows are used:

- 🌿 white willow (*Salix alba*) including its varieties;
- 🌿 crack willow (*Salix fragilis*) including its varieties;
- 🌿 Babylon willow (*Salix babylonica*);
- 🌿 goat willow (*Salix caprea*);
- 🌿 hybrids of different willow species like weeping willow (*Salix x sepulcralis*) and different cultivars.



Common osier (*Salix viminalis*).

2. Site, soil, feeding and watering

Although willows are flexible to different growing conditions and they can be found in coastal dunes as well as in mountainous areas, but for living structures and plantings it is preferable to have a medium condition:




- 🌿 loam and silt soil;
- 🌿 medium to high level of moisture;
- 🌿 well aerated soil;
- 🌿 medium pH (between 5 and 7)

They also like peat soil, but if it is not acidic.

It is very important that there is enough light as well as the soil is not full of stones or debris that would make difficult to create a proper living structure. Before establishing living structures or plantings, consider location of other plants, especially trees, location of buildings (not closer than 0.5 ... 1 m), power lines, drainage, etc.

Feeding




Feeding of living structures or plantings is not obligatory, but required in some cases, for instance:

-  if soil is very poor of mineral elements;
-  for acceleration of growth and branching;
-  structures or plantings are grown in pots or other containers.

For feeding use multipurpose or specialized mineral solutions or granules, purchased in garden centers or DIY stores, also other methods are possible (e. g. manure). Note that multipurpose solutions (or granules) are usually suitable for herbaceous plants and vegetables, so you must either find special nutrients for trees or change the dosage (then consider the type of structure or planting, container volume, season, etc.).

Watering

Watering is also an optional if the structures or plantings established at the right time (early to mid-spring) and the weather conditions afterwards are not severely dry. However, watering is required in the following situations:

-  the structure or planting was established in late spring or summer (when water level in the soil is insufficient);
-  cultivation takes place in pots or containers;
-  the soil is too dry because of extreme weather conditions.

Watering methods depends on the type of structure or planting; volume and location of the pot or container and climate conditions (temperature, relative humidity, wind) etc.

3. Trimming

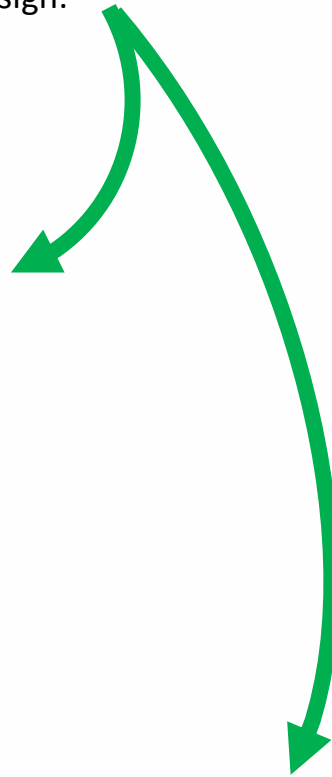
Trimming is necessary to make the structures or plantings decorative. Another advantage is that regular trimming prevents from formation of too large root system (in case if you decide to get rid of the structure or planting, it will be easier). Proper and regular trimming promotes branching of living structures or plantings.

Trimming pattern

During the trimming process, you can choose the design:

The skeleton of the structure or planting is clearly visible

In this pattern, the trimming is performed closer to the skeleton of the structure (main trunks and branches), so that it is clearly visible.



Forming a dense & branched structures or plantings

The second option, when the trimming is performed with bigger distance from the main trunks and branches, it allows the development of lateral shoots so you'll have a denser structure or planting.



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In both cases right trimming frequency is crucial.

Trimming frequency depends on the type of structure or planting and other obstacles (plant health, season etc.). For living structures 2-4 times per year would be optimal, even better if you can do more than that, but not too often (every week would be too much). For plantings very often 1 time per year is enough, but in some cases there is no need for trimming.

How to do it?

Hand, electric or petrol hedge trimmers are used to trim new shoots without injuring the main trunk and branches. The depth of the cut depends on the frequency of trimming and the desired result (see above).



4. Disease and pest control

The most common pests and diseases:

Compared to other trees and shrubs, willows are not very popular on pests' diet, but there are some examples such as: different aphids, willow sawflies, Japanese beetle



etc. The diseases sometimes include damage from rust fungi and asparagus, but in general, willow are also highly disease resistant.

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Pest and disease prevention:

The growth under optimal conditions is the best way to keep plants in good health. That's why most effective way to control pests and diseases is to ensure that the plant has everything it needs – soil with optimal level of mineral elements, lighting and proper humidity regime. Potential risk factors should be eliminated, such as other nearby plants with invasive pests or diseases should be removed away. In the event of extreme weather conditions, appropriate measures should be taken, such as watering in the event of prolonged drought.

In most cases, cultivation of plants in optimal conditions should be enough to control pests and diseases in harmless level, however, in case if pests or diseases cause severe damage, there are few steps that can be done:

- 1) cut damaged parts of the plant (if possible) and remove them (prevent the distribution);
- 2) use plant protection products appropriate to a specific situation – fungicides or insecticides. It is advisable to choose the services of specialists in this area. Salix Solutions also offers such kind of services. It is important to detect pests or diseases in right time and take action if necessary before they are widespread and cause serious damage.

If you have further questions regarding to willow living structures and plantings, please contact us!

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