

Salix cinerea

COMMON NAME

grey willow, pussy willow

FAMILY

Salicaceae

AUTHORITY

Salix cinerea L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE

SALCIN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Deciduous shrub or small tree up to 7 m tall, many branched forming dense thickets with grey or green-grey bark, leaves up to 7 x 3.5 cm, pale green on upper surface, grey below, flowers of two types produced in spring before the leaves on separate plants, the males being silky hairy catkins, often yellow due to pollen production, the female catkins being longer and silvery green.

DISTRIBUTION

Widespread and locally abundant throughout both islands but rare in the Far North, South Westland and Southland

HABITAT

Swamps, fens, water body margins and disturbed places.

FEATURES

Shrub or small tree to approx. 7m high, often only 1~2m, spreading or often forming dense thickets; bark rather smooth. Shoots not brittle; grey or greenish-grey and remaining hairy, or reddish to dark purple and often becoming glabrous or glabrate, generally with pale brown markings and striations prominent below surface for around 2 years. Buds reddish, glabrate or hairy. Petiole to about 1cm long on adult shoots, but often very short and hairy. Lamina 2~7 x 1.5~3.5cm, often smaller at base of lateral shoots, generally obovate, sometimes elliptic, not bitter to taste; grey or glaucous below, generally densely clothed in soft grey hairs, sometimes rather sparsely clothed in harsher reddish-brown hairs, soon glabrous and shining above except for midrib, glandular-serrulate to subentire; angle between midrib and veins $> 45^\circ$; apex rounded to cuspidate. Stipules semi-annular, small, persisting on strong vegetative shoots. Catkins appearing before leaves, 1.5~3.5cm long, broad-cylindric to clindric-ovate, generally erect; rachis villous. Bracts 1.5~3mm long, elliptic to oblong-obovate, black in upper half, sericeous; apex obtuse to rounded. Gland .5~.8mm long, rectangular to almost square. Stamens 2; filaments pilose towards base. Female flowers with pedicels $>$ bracts; ovary white-tomentose, stalked.

SIMILAR TAXA

Leaves are broader than most other common willows, the combination of obovate leaf shape and grey-hairy undersides should distinguish this from all other willows.



Salix cinerea. Photographer: John Barkla



Salix cinerea. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FLOWERING

September to October

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

FRUITING

October to November

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. shrub. Seed dispersed by wind, water and contaminated machinery.

YEAR NATURALISED

1925

ORIGIN

Europe, West Asia and North Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental shrub

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

ETYMOLOGY

cinerea: Ash-grey

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Webb et. al. (1988).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. (1988). Flora of New Zealand Volume 4: Naturalised pteridophytes, gymnosperms, dicotyledons. Botany Division, DSIR, Christchurch.

Popay et al (2010). An illustrated guide to common weeds of New Zealand, third edition. NZ Plant Protection Society Inc, 416pp.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/salix-cinerea/>