White Willow Bark Class
White Willow Bark

• The white willow, or otherwise known as salix alba, is the name of a beautiful willow tree that is part of the genus Salix. The white willow is native mainly to Europe and parts of Asia, however willows are found all over the world. There are about 300 species of willows in existence, with countless hybrids. The name white willow comes from its leaves. The leaves have fine white hairs on them, hence the name white willow. The medicinal uses of white willows have been taken advantage of since at least the 5th century BC when Hippocrates, the Greek physician wrote about patients chewing on the bark to reduce inflammation and fever. Did you know that the wood from the white willow is used to make bats for the game cricket?

• Bark on a white willow tree is usually a grayish-brown color and in older trees it is very deeply fissured. The trunks can grow up to 3 feet in diameter, while the tree itself can grow anywhere from 30 to 100 feet tall. The trunk is always an irregular shape and tends to lean over. The branches are normally a grayish-brown or greenish-brown color. White willow leaves are a paler lighter green color than most willows because of the silky white hairs on the undersides on them. They are anywhere from 1 to 3 inches long and are normally about half an inch in width. In early spring, the trees will produce flowers in a slim cylindrical cluster. The female and male flowers are on separate trees. The male flowers grow to about 2 inches long while the females are about 1 and a half inches long.

• White willow is used for many different industries and products. It is used mainly for medicinal purposes, however it can also be used for bath and body products, skin care, hair care, and in foods and beverages. The wood of a white willow tree can be used to make charcoal that was an important ingredient in the manufacturing of gunpowder.
• White willow trees have specific but very easy conditions needed for them to grow. They cannot grow when fully covered in shade, growing best when placed in a very sunny environment. They can grow in very light soil or very heavy clay-like soils but they do prefer it to be moist or wet. It is also suitable for soils with very acidic pH levels or just neutral pH levels. White willow trees thrive best when planted in areas with a high humidity like riverbanks.

• When planted in warm climates, the blooming phase of the tree can begin as early as February. In colder climates, the blooming phase can last through June. The flowers of the tree are full of nectar and need to be pollinated by bees and insects in order for the tree to stay alive. Within 45 to 60 days after pollination from the insects, the tree is ready to start its reproduction process.

• There are many pests and diseases that can effect the tree. There are several insects that will attack and harm the tree such as lace bugs, aphids, scale, borers, gypsy moths, willow leaf beetles, and even caterpillars. It is susceptible to diseases like anthracnose fungi, crown gall, and fungal canker. The wood is very sensitive to storm damage.
White Willow Bark Uses in Industries

Food

• While there are no popular foods made with white willow bark, the bark can be dried and ground into a powder. The powder can be used in flour for baking bread, however it is a very bitter taste. The leaves and shoots are edible as well, but not very palatable. There is also white willow bark tea that can be made. The tea has been used as a gargle for inflamed gums and to treat cuts, burns, and sores.

Bath and Body Products

• White willow bark can be used in many different products and industries. It can be used for medicinal purposes, skin care, bath and body products, and hair care. When used in herbal and skin care formulas, it is well known for its pain relieving properties.

• Common products that include white willow bark are bath salts, bath teas, creams, lotions, ointments, bath bombs, facial masks, soaps, and scrubs.

• There are many skin care benefits to using white willow bark. It helps to treat blackheads, acne, whiteheads, and inflamed and oily skin. It also gives the skin a smooth even complexion and brightens any dark areas.

• When used for hair care, white willow bark helps to remove excess oils and dandruff from the hair and brings moisture to the hair and scalp. It also promotes shinier and thicker hair while stimulating hair growth.

• In herbal concoctions, it has been used to treat muscle cramps, arthritis, and rheumatism.
uses in industries

medicinal

• There are many medicinal benefits to using white willow bark. It is anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, anti-pyretic, astringent, and analgesic. It can be used to treat arthritis, gas, diarrhea, heart burn, fever, headaches, migraines, the flu, colds, joint pain, tendonitis, bursitis, and osteoarthritis. In the mid 1700s, white willow bark was used as a treatment for malaria.

• In 1829, it was discovered that white willow bark contained a compound known as salicin. Salicin works like aspirin and is better for your stomach by not irritating the stomach lining as much. White willow bark also contains more tannins than aspirin that help to protect the stomach as well.

• White willow bark also has components like flavonoids and some natural antioxidants that help to remove harmful chemicals from the body that could later cause cancers, or other serious diseases.

• It can also be used to treat gout and a spinal disease called ankylosing spondylitis.

• For women, white willow bark can be used to help menstrual cramps and treat the pain they cause. It can also help with hot flashes and night sweats caused by menopause. However, it is not recommended for pregnant women.

• For people trying to lose weight that take herbal supplements, white willow bark is used to speed up the process of these other herbs.
Medicinal

- The willow bark tea can be used as a gargle for sore throats and tonsillitis.
- White willow bark tea is used as a foot soak for sore, sweaty, or smelly feet.
- Any festering sores that are present can be treated with it as well by soaking cotton balls in white willow bark tea and then washing the sores with the cotton balls.
- An activated charcoal powder can be made from the wood of the tree. The charcoal powder can be used to treat prescription or over the counter drug poisoning, heart burn, diarrhea, gas and many other gastrointestinal ailments.
- For arthritis sufferers, it has been found that white willow bark helps to reduce inflammation and swelling, and helps to increase mobility in joints, knees, hips, and the back.
- In Europe, it has been used to help stop vomiting, remove warts, and even suppress sexual desire.
Other Uses

• The stems from the white willow trees can be used to make baskets and fibers from the stems are used to make paper.

• Tannin taken from the bark of white willow trees has even been used for tanning leather.

• The genus name, Salix, comes from the Celtic words sal lis, which mean “near water.”

• Nature’s Garden sells white willow bark for external use only. We do not sell it as a food item. The information above talks about how great white willow bark is for many industries, however we only sell it for external use. We provide this data for educational purposes only. Nothing in this article is to be construed as medical advice. Please consult your doctor before using this product or any of this information for treatment purposes.

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