

Common Willows

of the Blindman River

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SPECIES

Alberta is home to a diverse number of willows, commonly found throughout our riparian areas. These moisture loving plants help to bind soil along the banks of waterbodies, providing effective erosion control with their extensive network of deep roots. Willows often form dense thickets, creating protective habitat for many wildlife species. Many native willows are some of the first plants to bloom in the spring, providing an early source of nectar and pollen to native pollinators. Of Alberta's many native willow species, there are a few that are commonly found within the Blindman River Watershed:

Sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*)

An easy to identify willow, sandbar willow often grows into a slender, multi-branched shrub, with wispy branches and long-slender leaves. Sandbar willow flourishes in the sun and will take advantage of open riparian spaces where its ability to sucker will lead to dense thickets. Brandishing deep binding roots, sandbar willow helps to reduce erosion and protect from flooding. Gifted with an early and long-lasting bloom period, sandbar willow is an excellent pollen and nectar resource for pollinators.



Beaked/Bebb's willow (*Salix bebbiana*)

Beaked willow (also known as Bebb's willow) is unique among our willows in that it tolerates drier conditions and as such can also be found further upland from riparian areas. Beaked willow also can grow into a fairly large and tall shrub, reaching upwards of 10 meters under ideal conditions. Like sandbar willow, beaked willow has deep binding roots and has a similar long-lasting flowering period. As well as providing quality forage for wildlife.



We are proud to acknowledge support from the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program which made this project possible.

WATERSHED RESILIENCY AND
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Pussy willow (*Salix discolor*)

The well-known pussy willow bears the characteristic fluffy emerging male flowers that are often the first thing many people think of when willows are mentioned. Many willow species have visually similar flowers and can often be misidentified as pussy willow. Like many willows (and the aforementioned sandbar and beaked), pussy willow is an excellent soil stabilizer, great source of pollen & nectar, and provides high quality forage for wildlife.



Learn more about the Blindman River sub-watershed and the restoration activities going on with the Friends of the Blindman River Stewardship Committee!



[Friends of the Blindman Stewardship Committee](#)



[The Blindman River Restoration Project](#)

REFERENCES & USEFUL RESOURCES

<https://www.awes-ab.ca/species/>

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