

Grey willow

Salix cinerea

Family

Salicaceae (willow)

Also known as

Pussy willow, sallow, *Salix atrocinerea*

Where is it originally from?

Europe, West Asia, North Africa

What does it look like?

Deciduous shrub or small tree (<7 m), spreading or thicket-forming with suckering roots and smooth bark. Separate male and female plants. Shoots aren't brittle, and are either grey or greenish-grey and hairy, or reddish-purple and hairless, usually with pale brown markings below surface for two years. Buds are reddish, and oval serrated leaves (20-70 x 15-35 mm) are shiny on the top surface and grey or bluish with dense, soft, grey (occasionally reddish-brown) hairs underneath, are not bitter to taste, and are arranged alternately on the stem. Erect, cylindrical catkins (15- 35 mm long) are produced from September to October before leaves appear. Seed capsule is 2-valved and contains many seeds.

Are there any similar species?

Many *Salix* species are similar. Pussy willow (*S. x reichardtii*) is a cross of *S. cinerea* and has yellow catkins.

Why is it weedy?

Produces many, widely dispersed, short-lived seeds, grows rapidly, and resprouting and suckering habit creates dense thickets. Tolerates flooding, hot to cold temperatures, range of soils, and semi-shade.

How does it spread?

Seeds spread by the wind, and stem fragments and occasionally seed are spread by water. Suckers locally. Planted intentionally on stream and river banks and also in damp places to absorb water.

What damage does it do?

Replaces native species in wetlands and forms vast dense (often pure) stands and thickets. Causes blockages, flooding and structural changes in waterways.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Stream and lake edges, river systems, wetlands, and alluvial plains, throughout New Zealand.

What can I do to get rid of it?

Begin control at top of catchment, treat every stem.

1. Cut and squirt (summer-autumn): Make 1 cut every 100mm around the trunk and saturate with 10ml glyphosate (undiluted).
2. Cut stump application: apply picloram gel. Remove all plant material from site as all cut stems can root where they fall.
3. Bore and fill (summer-autumn): Make 1 hole every 100 mm around the trunk and saturate each hole with 10ml glyphosate (undiluted) or 2ml metsulfuron-methyl 600g/kg (20g/L).
4. Frilling (summer-autumn): glyphosate (100ml/L).
5. Spray (full leaf stage only): glyphosate (12.5ml/L + penetrant, total coverage needed) or metsulfuron-methyl 600 g/kg (35g/100L from January to April before leaf fall begins).

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Cut stumps regrow rapidly. Best to poison while standing to avoid live stem contact with ground. Prevent grazing and other disturbance. Interplanting can follow if non-spray follow up control options used.



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Photo: Trevor James



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