



Invasive Plant Alert¹

Corkscrew willow *Salix matsudana* Koidzumi

Corkscrew willow is widely sold as an ornamental tree and for erosion control. Corkscrew willow is a problem because its shallow, fast-growing roots can damage utility lines, foundations, and sidewalks, it hybridizes with other willows, and it sprouts readily from cuttings. Corkscrew willow can grow 10 to 15 feet per year. It is a short-lived tree with weak wood that is susceptible to many insects and pathogens and is prone to trunk and branch decay.



Figure 3 Leaves. LSU Horticulture Dept.

Where to Look

Corkscrew willow is native to Asia and has naturalized in Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Virginia, and Utah. It occurs

in Kennilworth marsh in our region. Like many willows, corkscrew willow prefers moist soils but does tolerate some drought. The sale and use of this plant should be discouraged.



Figure 2 Branches. Photo Credit Courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden

Identifying the Plant

Corkscrew willow is an upright tree up to 40 feet tall, with a broad crown of drooping, twisted branches. Leaves are 3 to 5 inches long, alternate, lanceolate, and finely serrated. Leaves are often twisted and are shiny green above and nearly white beneath. Flowers appear in pale yellow-green fuzzy 1 to 1.5 inch catkins in early spring. Fruits are one-inch clusters of inconspicuous light brown capsules containing numerous small fuzzy seeds. Fruits ripen in late spring.

Twigs are slender, twisting and contorted, olive-green when young and turning grey-brown when mature. Bark is smooth, grey-brown, with diamond-shaped lenticels, becoming shallowly fissured and rough with age.



Figure 1 *S. matsudana*. Photo Credit Courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden

How to get rid of it?

Little species-specific information is available. Young seedlings should be dug up. Care should be taken to remove the entire plant, including roots, to avoid the possibility of regrowth from sprouts. Older plants may be controlled using a systemic herbicide applied as a basal bark or cut-stump treatment.

Resources

Virginia Tech, Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation.
<http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus2/factsheet.cfm?ID=808>.

Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, 4th ed. (2010).
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/control-trees.htm>.

University of Florida, IFAS Extension, EDIS Publication #ENH-735
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/st577>.

¹ This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region