Peach-leaf Willow (*Salix amygdaloides*) Salicaceae (Willow Family)

Status: Red / Not Assessed
Best Survey Time: Apr to Jun
General Habitat: Foreshore

RANGE

- Occurs throughout North America from southern Canada to Pennsylvania west to Texas (USA)
- In British Columbia, only found in the Okanagan Valley at Osoyoos Lake and from Kelowna to Vernon
- Some of the records for this species have not been recently confirmed

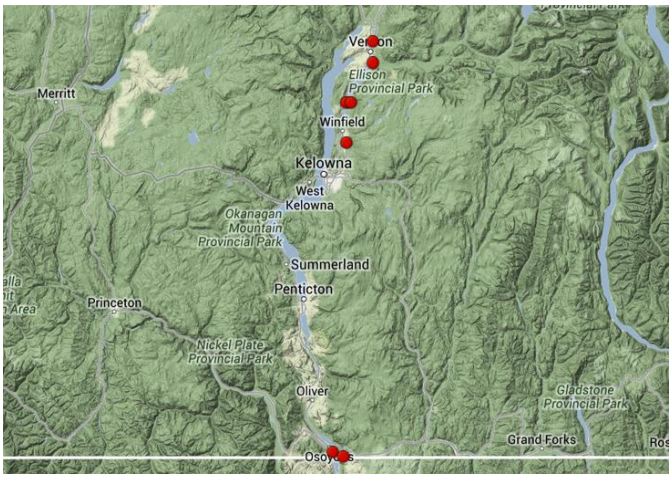

Figure 1 B.C. distribution of *Salix amygdaloides* (BC CDC 2013)

HABITAT

- Grows along moist to mesic shores of lakes, rivers and creeks, and perhaps also along drainage ditches in the Bunchgrass and Interior Douglas-fir Biogeoclimatic Zones
- Prefers warm sites
- Common associates include various wetland grasses, willows (*Salix* spp.) and sedges (*Carex* spp.)

Figure 2 Seasonally flooded lakeshore habitat at Ellison Lake, B.C.

Figure 3 *Salix amygdaloides* (light green foliage) along lakeshore

LIFE HISTORY

- Perennial species that produces catkins and seeds from April into late May
- Apparently only reproduces by seeds that will germinate where open soil is available

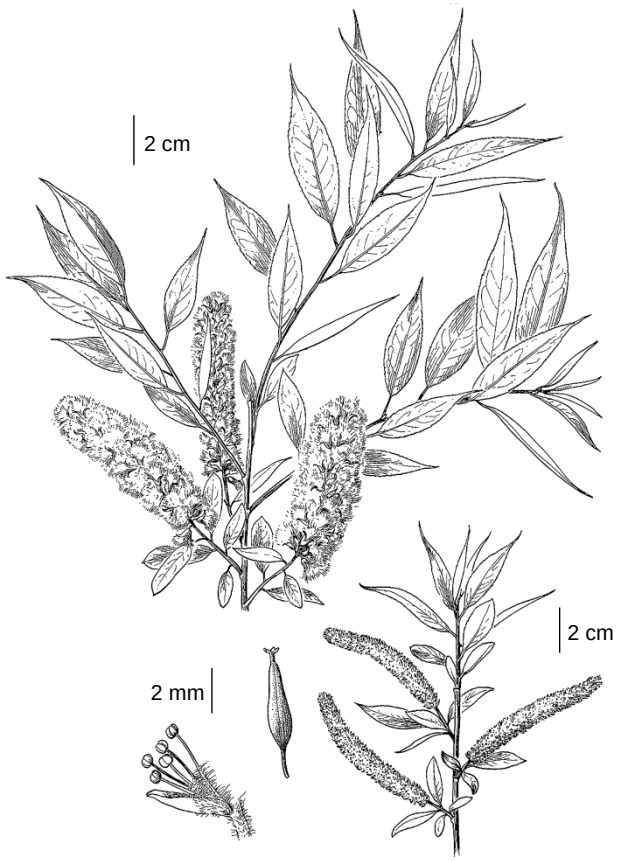

Figure 4 Illustration of *Salix amygdaloides* by Jeanne R. Janish (Hitchcock et al. 1969)

Salix amygdaloides (continued)

DESCRIPTION

General

- Tree up to 20 m tall, and usually with a single trunk
- Branches somewhat brittle at base with mature bark becoming rough and brownish gray, shallowly furrowed, and slightly scaly with age
- Twigs smooth and green when young turning yellowish to brown when mature

Leaves

- Scales covering leaf buds have margins that are free (not fused) and overlapping (most willows have fused scales)
- Leaves alternately arranged and simple, with blades narrowly elliptic to lance-shaped, 5.5 to 13 cm long, 2.5 to 4 cm wide, and with fine teeth along margins
- Upper leaf surfaces rather dull and smooth, lower surfaces pale whitish-green and often somewhat glaucous (having a bluish-waxy appearance), smooth, and lack raised veins
- Leaf bases gently to sharply tapered and ends usually long-tapered, often with a long narrow tip
- Narrow petioles (leaf stalks) much shorter than blades, often with glandular dots near blade
- Stipules (outgrowths on the stem where leaf is attached) rudimentary or leaf-like on vigorous shoots

Flowers

- Flowers reduced (lacking petals and sepals) and unisexual, with numerous male and female florets borne in cylindrical catkins on separate plants
- Catkins produced on short lateral branches as leaves emerge in the spring, male catkins 3 to 6 cm long and female catkins 3 to 8 cm long
- Female floret consists of narrowly pear-shaped, 3 to 4 mm long, green and hairless ovary with terminal 0.2 to 0.4 mm long styles
- Each female floret has slender pedicel (stalk), 1.5 to 3 mm long, subtended by a deciduous bract at base
- Male flowers composed of a bract and 3 to 7 stamens, male flowers wither and fall from plant after releasing pollen
- Floral bracts pale and with wavy hairs

Fruits

- Fruits are capsules, which turn brown and split open when mature, releasing tiny seeds with tufts of hair

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- Distinguished from similar willows by its tall size when mature, bud scales that have free overlapping margins, leaves with pale undersides, small teeth along leaf margins, hairless leaves and ovaries, and deciduous bracts of the female flowers
- No other B.C. willow has all of these characteristics

Figure 5 Close-up of *Salix amygdaloides* leaves

GENERAL THREATS AND GUIDANCE

- **Avoid development in areas with known occurrences of *Salix amygdaloides* through project relocation or redesign**
- Protect moist to mesic shores of lakes, rivers and creeks from disturbance and development, including exclusion of livestock through fencing, and consider restoration including invasive plant removal following professional advice
- Follow provincial methods for when and how to conduct plant species at risk surveys
- Follow provincial policy and guidance on how to avoid, minimize, restore and offset impacts to plant species at risk and their habitats
- Report any sightings to the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (cdcdata@gov.bc.ca) and FLNR Ecosystems Section (josie.symonds@gov.bc.ca)

REFERENCES

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