

Our Arroyo Ecosystem



Arroyo Willow *Salix lasiolepis*

This willow thrives along the edges of streams where it takes advantage of moist soils. It is essential for wildlife habitat within its range. It grows to a maximum of about 30' in height. Its flowers, called catkins, have no petals or sepals. They appear in the spring before the leaves do. Male and female flowers are produced by separate plants.

Willows are often used for stream bank stabilization, and can be easily grown from cuttings. In fact, hormones derived from willows are often used by nurseries to help other plant cuttings take root.

The Chumash used willow poles for the framework of their thatched houses, called 'Aps, which were then covered with cattails or tules. Willow shoots were used for basket-weaving and as seed beaters. Its bark was chewed as a toothache remedy, and an infusion of willow bark or flowers was used to cure ailments ranging from fevers to itchiness and diarrhea.

Indeed, medicinal use of willow is recorded as far back as c.400 BC, when Hippocrates gave women willow leaf tea to relieve the pain of childbirth. The chemical used in aspirin was first derived from the willow.



For more information on the Arroyo Willow, visit

<http://www.parksconservancy.org/conservation/plants-animals/native-plant-information/arroyo-willow.html>

For more on the use of plants in Chumash medicine, visit

<http://ethnobiology.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/JoE/7-2/Timbrook1987.pdf>