

# Hello Trees Resource Sheet

What to look for outdoors in Spring

## Pussy willow trees



Have a magnifying glass in your pocket.

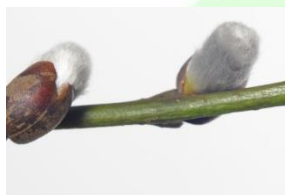


When you go out in the countryside or walking along the edge of a park, look out for a tree covered in silvery bobbles.

You are most likely to see the tree near water.



*Male pussy willow tree*



*Pussy willow catkins emerging*

Sometimes white or glossy things look silvery but, if you can get close to them, you will see that these really are silvery grey and silky, like a pussy cat's fur. We call them **pussy willow** and soon they will be covered in yellow pollen.



*Pussy willow covered in pollen*



Will the pollen be blown away?  
Or will it be carried away by insects?



Clue: Look at the photo.  
Can you see an insect of any kind?



What do you think it is doing?

Yes, it is a bee and it is collecting nectar from the flower.



As it does so, it is getting itself covered in pollen.



Where will the pollen be carried?

Where is the flower that needs to catch the pollen in order for seeds to grow?

Is the right flower on this tree?

No, it is not on this tree.

This is a **male** tree. It only has pollen-bearing flowers.



*Pussy willow leaves*

*Bark at the base and on the branch of a pussy willow tree*

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*Female pussy willow tree*

There is another tree, a **female** pussy-willow tree, that has the kind of flowers that will grow seeds if they collect pussy willow pollen.



See if you can find a female pussy willow tree. It is the same shape and has the same leaves and bark as a male pussy willow.

The female flowers are longer and made up of tiny pale green tubes.



See if you can see a flared tip and a swollen base on each tube.

The tiny flared tip is the **stigma** that catches pollen.



The swollen base is the **ovary** that contains **ovules**.

The tube in between is the **style**.

Pollen falling on the stigma will travel down through the style to fuse with an ovule so that a seed can form.

Seeds that fall on moist earth could grow into a new pussy willow tree.

Pussy willow seeds are minute dark brown specks surrounded by a fluffy white ball that will float about in the air. Some seeds will grow into male pussy willow trees and some will grow into female pussy willow trees.

Other names for the pussy willow are '**goat willow**' and '**sallow**' and the botanical name is **Salix caprea**. 'Caprea' comes from the Greek word for goat, which is the star sign for Capricorn.



I wonder whether goats like to eat pussy willow leaves?!

Caterpillars of the Purple Emperor Butterfly do.



Can you see a Purple Emperor egg or larva on your pussy willow tree?

See [Pussy willow and the Purple Emperor](#) butterfly to know what to look for.



For more about trees, fun things to look for and do indoors and outdoors, and about Hello Trees books see <http://hellotrees.co.uk/>



*Female pussy willow flowers*



*Pussy willow seeds*