

XERISCAPE

NATURE'S CHOICE OF LANDSCAPE



Chilopsis linearis (Desert Willow)

Desert willow is a fast-growing tree reaching up to 25 feet with spectacular trumpet –shaped flowers and glossy green, willow-like foliage. *Chilopsis linearis* is native to the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, and is commonly seen in dry washes from 1500 to 5000 feet. The fragrant orchid-like flowers in varying colors attract hummingbirds. Desert willow blooms in clusters from May through October. In winter, this tree is deciduous which reveals its interesting branch structure.

Desert willow can be planted on western and southern exposures where shade is desired in summer, and allows radiant heat to warm homes or structures in winter. *Chilopsis linearis* provides light shade for other plants such as Mexican honeysuckle and penstemons. Once established, this tree can survive on rainfall alone, but supplemental irrigation during the summer will produce more attractive foliage and flowers. Desert willow prefers well drained soil. Its natural form is multi-trunked, but careful pruning will encourage development of a more tree-like form.

Desert willow enhances the oasis feeling of a landscape and is a valuable source of food for native wildlife. Because of its leafless nature in the winter, consider grouping evergreen desert trees and shrubs nearby.

The many forms of desert willow vary considerably in growth habit, mature height, leaf size, and flower color. *Chilopsis* can be a tall, upright tree or a weeping shrub. Mature heights range from 18 to 25 feet. The leaves are narrow and lanceolate (lance shaped). Different cultivated varieties of desert willow offer flower colors of white, light pink, lavender, deep purple-red, and royal purple. Specific named cultivars have consistent growth characteristics. We recommend that you research the growth characteristics of the cultivated variety you will be using in order to ensure the right size and shape for the planting area.

Another popular tree, commonly called Chitalpa, is a hybrid between *Chilopsis linearis* and *Catalpa bignonioides*. This hybrid, *X Chitalpa tashkentensis*, combines the larger flower size and clusters of catalpa with the linear leaves and flower color of *chilopsis*. This medium size tree grows to 30 feet and does not produce papery fruits. Two chitalpa cultivars currently available produce white flowers with purple markings, and soft pink flowers. Check with your local retail nursery for availability.