

developed only runners and the control *S. alba* × *S. fragilis* first roots and later branchlets.

The creative, economic and environmental applications of willow

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Historically willow has played an important role in the development of creative traditions and practices serving to strengthen the bonds between people and the land. The wide range of creative and economic applications of willow has defined its usefulness to man, both as an environmental and as a cultural resource. Thus the development of human creativity is closely associated with willow; the tree has also been a seminal factor in providing cultural experience of the environment. This is exemplified by the rich folklore associations of willow trees, and in the variety of artistic and literary productions based on them.

The development of willow crafts such as basket making, furniture making, hurdles, and in other domestic and agricultural applications was an integral part of traditional land management practices and the rural economy. Willow coppicing for basket making, hurdling etc. was central to the health of the countryside and to the preservation of the character of rural landscapes. In the last ten years the growing consumer interest in natural products, and in supporting rural environments, has contributed to a resurgence of interest in environmental and craft uses of willow.

Landscape architects, craft workers, artists, farmers, and some environmental organisations have begun to experiment with economic and creative uses of willow, in response to the necessity for finding new uses and options for the land. Blending traditional practices, innovative ideas in art, and environmental concerns, they are exploring the use of willow in such areas as land reclamation, biotex, urban landscape projects, and in collaborations with sculptors and craft workers in the development of contemporary art forms for the environment. Environmental organisations, including the Groundwork Trusts, the Countryside Commission, and urban forestry initiatives, are also employing creative and artistic users of willow in support of environmental work with schools, and for community based environmental regeneration schemes.

In response to the major changes taking place in the countryside, and to the predicted shift in agriculture away from food production, willow has recently become the focus for interdisciplinary research combining science and the arts.