PUSSY WILLOW SHRUB CARE

LIGHT

Pussy-willow shrubs grow best in full sun, with some light shade tolerated. This group includes upright goat willow, native pussy willow, Black Cat, Mount Aso, and black pussy-willow types. Give them room for a vigorous multi-stemmed framework and reliable moisture, away from drains and small paved planting pockets.

WATER

Water slowly through the root ball and surrounding soil after planting. Check moisture regularly and water deeply when needed, keeping roots consistently moist during establishment. Adjust for rain, weather, and soil conditions rather than a fixed daily schedule. A new root ball can dry out even beside damp ground.

SOIL & PLANTING

Plant with the root flare at or slightly above the surrounding ground level. Keep any graft union above soil. Mulch lightly across the root zone without touching stems. Protect roots from compaction, lawn equipment, and repeated digging. Leave room for the plant's mature spread rather than relying on repeated hard cutting.

FEEDING

Use a soil test to guide fertilizer and pH changes. Healthy willows may need little feeding. If nutrients are needed, apply a modest spring dose of tree or shrub fertilizer at the label rate. Avoid heavy nitrogen and late-season feeding; fertilizer cannot correct poor siting or damaged roots.

SEASONAL CARE

Enjoy the catkin display before pruning. On established own-root shrubs, selectively remove older or crowded stems after flowering to encourage new shoots for next year. More substantial renewal can be used on vigorous shrubs when needed. Do not apply this method below a graft on a weeping standard.

HELPFUL TIPS

Silvery, pink, or black catkins vary by species, cultivar, and flowering stage. Bare branches with catkins before leaves emerge are normal. Flowering can be reduced by pruning at the wrong time. Check for cankers, pests, and stem dieback if growth declines; do not treat all dark catkins as disease.