

## Barfad Willow

### **Soaking Instructions for dried willow.**

Traditionally dried, brown willow - that is willow with the bark left on - needs to be soaked for a day for each foot of its length. This advice is often quoted in the literature: it refers to chemically treated mass produced willow, usually 'black maul'.

The many varieties of Barfad Willow are grown organically, and it appears that their soaking times may be significantly longer. The following guidelines should help to produce good results:

- **Soaking:** Before soaking loosen the willow bundle. Then soak for *about* a day per foot of length in cold water – but be prepared to soak for longer if necessary. Soaking in warm water in a bath indoors will speed up soaking times; different varieties need different amounts of soaking. The important thing is to *test* the willow regularly during soaking.
- **Testing:** Test to see if soaking is sufficient by bending the butt end into a 'U' shape. If the willow forms a 'V' it is not ready.
- **Over soaking:** The willow doesn't over soak easily, but if the bark is lifting then over soaking has occurred. In this case remove the willow gently and spread it to dry for about an hour. Mellow, as below, and the willow should be useable.
- **Mellowing:** When soaking is complete wrap the bundles in a damp cloth, such as a blanket, for about two days.

If it is kept cool and wrapped in a cloth, dried willow treated in this way should stay usable for about a week.