



Name clarification: *Salix babylonica* L. vs. *S. matsudana* Koidz.

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Yulia A. Kuzovkina¹ and Irina V. Belyaeva²

¹Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, Unit-4067, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-4067, USA

²Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, TW9 3AE, UK

The two binomials – *S. babylonica* L. vs. *S. matsudana* Koidz. – are frequently used interchangeably in references, scientific publications and catalogs. This discrepancy stems from a difference of opinion on the circumscription or the relationships of the taxa among taxonomists who fall into two camps. In some cases *S. matsudana* is considered to be the synonym of *S. babylonica*, and in other cases, these two names denote two different species.



Salix babylonica 'Tortuosa', dragon's claw willow or curly willow, an ornamental cultivar with contorted stems. Photo courtesy of M. Dodge, Vermont Willow Nursery.

Salix matsudana was described by Koidzumi (1915) referring to the non-weeping taxon from China. This segregation was followed by Rehder (1927, 1940, 1949) who treated “less weeping selections” from China as *S. matsudana*. Fang et al. (1999), Ohashi (2001) also remarked that the unique characteristics of *S. matsudana* merit recognition as a distinct species apart from *S. babylonica*. Another group of botanists, including Skvortsov (1999), Santamour and McArdle (1988) believe that there is little evidence to substantiate the notion of the separation of the two species, and that it is biologically more sensible to regard *S. matsudana* as synonymous with *S. babylonica*. In their recent publication Ohashi and Yonekura (2015) regarded *S. matsudana* as conspecific with *S. babylonica* and treated it newly as a variety, *S. babylonica* var. *matsudana* (Koidz.) H.Ohashi & Yonek.

At this point, an author’s choice of names in publications is the deciding factor. Based on the majority of current taxonomic opinions by monographers of Salicaceae it is advisable to consider *S. babylonica* as including *S. matsudana*. The *World Checklist of Salicaceae sensu stricto* lists *S. babylonica* as the accepted name and *S. matsudana* as its synonym.



Salix babylonica ‘Crispa’ – a female clone of unknown origin with leaves rolled up to form rings or spirals is suitable for cultivation in north temperate zones. Photo by Y.A. Kuzovkina.

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