

Osier beds

Osiers or Willow (*Salix viminalis*) were grown as a crop in marginal boggy lands such as river banks. Often the landscape was altered to give a wider area of river channels with small islands allowing a greater growing area.



Osier Cutting by H. R. Robertson. Source: *Life on the Upper Thames*. Courtesy of University of Toronto

is not managed for osier production and many of the willows have gone, although the area is still known as the Osier Beds. In 1953 these covered an area of nearly 14 acres. The rich wetland flora and the wildlife it supports are an important part of the landscape at Panshanger.

The osier beds at Panshanger at Panshanger have been there for many years, providing coppiced willow for baskets, wattle fences and other products. Coppicing is a woodland management technique whereby the tree is cut down to just above the stool every few years. The willow regenerates with lots of shoots providing slender stems which can be cut down again in a few years time to provide more raw material. Often this felling is done on a rotational basis so a different small area is cut each year. In recent years this has been adapted to provide biomass for Green Energy heating.

At Panshanger the wood was enhanced with other wetland trees to form an ornamental woodland in the overall historic valley landscape. Today the land



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