



# Maya Farming



## Maya Plants



Squash



Chili



Runner beans



Corn on the Cob/ Maize



Cacao beans



Papaya



Sweet potato



Avocado



Tomatoes

## Information on Maya Agriculture

[Maya farming](#)

[The importance of maize in Maya agriculture](#)

[About Maya agriculture](#)

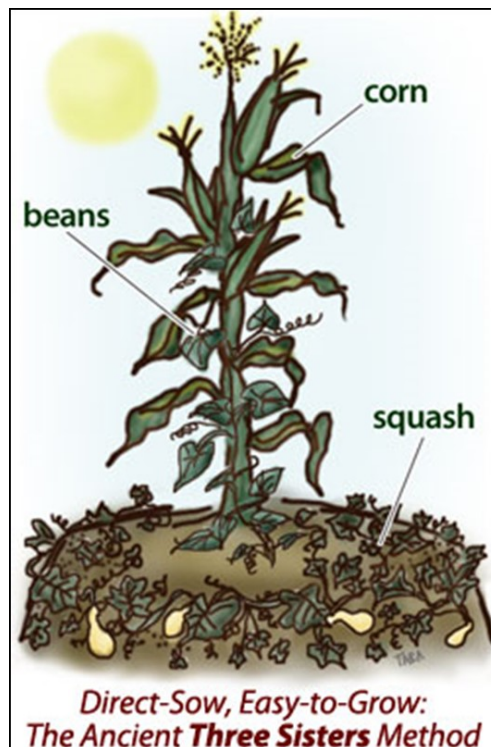
[Maya agriculture and diet](#)

[Maya population of the Lacandon rainforest](#)

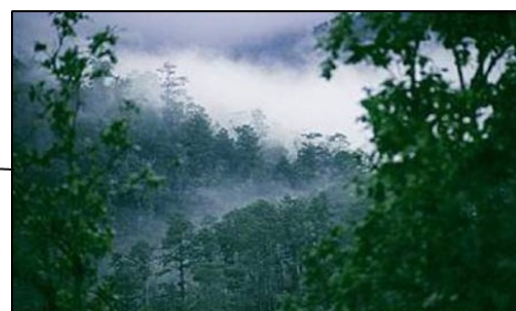
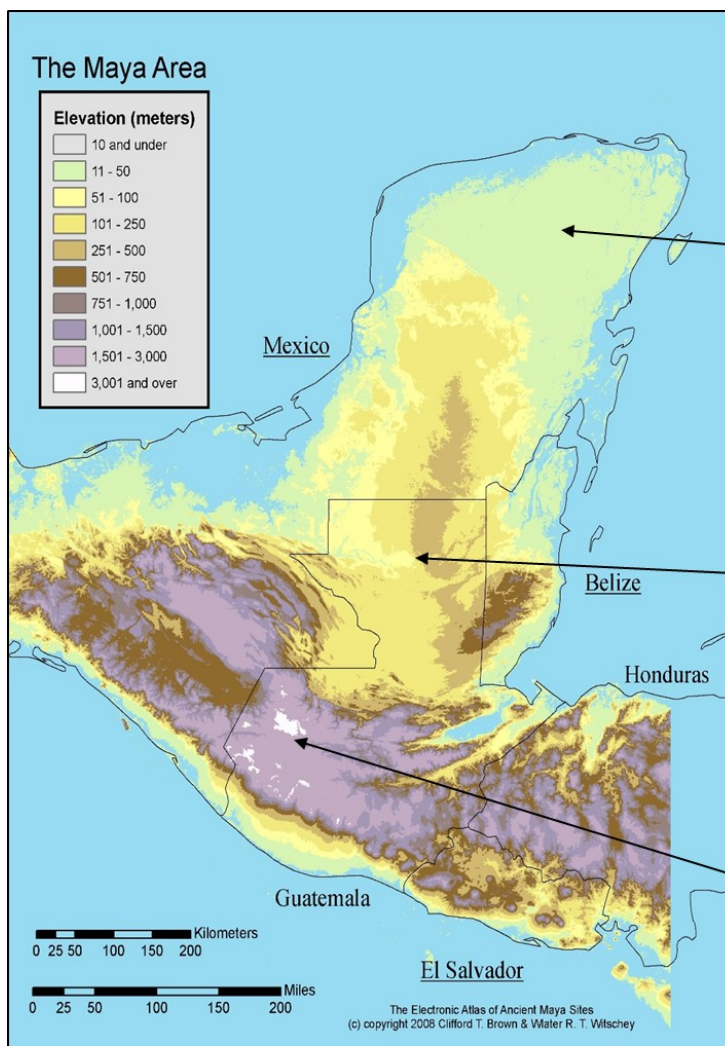
In ancient Maya times, squash, maize and beans were often grown together and nicknamed the 'Three Sisters.' The maize provided a tall structure for the beans to twine around and the squash covered the ground so that weeds didn't grow.

Do you think that was a good strategy?

Why?



What were the three different types of environment that Maya people lived in?



# Maya Farming Challenge:

## The northern grasslands

You live in the far north of the Yucatan peninsula. The grasslands are covered in thorny bushes and cacti. It is very dry and in the summer there are often natural fires. There are deep shafts called *cenotes* from place to place and some of these have water at the bottom.

Your challenge:

- How will you get rid of the thorny plants?
- How will you keep your crops watered?



## The rainforest

You live in a very steamy, wet environment with lots of swamps and lakes around you. The rainforest is very thick and it is difficult to find clearings to plant crops.

Your challenge:

- How do you keep your plants from being waterlogged in the wet season?
- How do you get rid of the rainforest plants to create fields?



## The southern mountains

Where you live there aren't many flat places to grow crops. The mountains are covered in forest except at the very top where no plants grow anyway because it is too cold and dry.

Your challenge:

- How do you make flat places to grow crops?
- How do you make fields in the forest?



## Maya Farming Challenge:

**The northern grasslands**



**The rainforest**



**The southern mountains**



# How did the Maya really farm?

In the southern mountains, the Maya cut into the sides of the hills to make steps, called terraces, to create flat areas to farm on.



In the central rainforest, the Maya constructed raised fields to keep their crops from being waterlogged.

In the northern grassland, the shafts, or cenotes, were often dug deeper to reach water that could be used for crops.



## THE MILPA CYCLE



In all these areas, the forest was often burned away to start with to create milpa fields for the 'Three Sisters'.

After two or three years the milpa would be allowed to grow over and then the forest plants would be harvested.

Finally, the forest grew back completely and would be burned again to create the milpa.