

## *Raised Bed Farming*

Many Mayan regions in lowlands had swampy lands where it was hard to cultivate crops. Mayans worked around this problem by creating raised beds. These raised beds were typically created right by the canals and then the Mayans cultivated their crops in them. Similarly, they built raised farms by creating them at an artificial height. They did this by propping up mats of woven reed at some height from the swampy waters. On top of these mats, they placed the fertile mud from the bottom of the swamps and then cultivated seeds in this mud. Such farming was very fruitful, yielding two to three crops in a single year.

## **Raised field**

The Mayas used this method to farm areas of land that otherwise would have been too wet to use. Small canals were created by digging out soil from beneath the water and piling up to create small islands. Maya farmers could then grow crops on these islands while they harvested the fish that swam in the canals.

In the swampy lowlands, the Maya built raised earth platforms, surrounded by canals, on which they could grow crops. (Later on, the Aztecs improved on this system, and built floating gardens.)

## *Terrace Farming*

Mayan civilisation was spread over a vast region. So while some [Mayan cities](#) had access to level land for agricultural farming, others confronted hills. [Mayan cities](#) located near hills turned them to their advantage by creating terraces along the slopes of these hills. The Mayans created the terraces by lining them with a wall at the border. This helped them eliminate any erosion and also mitigate water runoff by securing water within the fields. Maize and other crops were grown on these terrace farms which were watered using canals constructed by the Mayans in such a way as to use water most efficiently.

## **Terrace farming**

This is where walls are built to make small flat fields one on top of the other. It was useful for increasing the amount of farmland in mountain areas. Most terraces were small, but in some parts of the Maya lowlands, they dramatically transformed entire regions!

In the mountainous highlands, they used step farming, so that each step would be flat and able to be irrigated to better grow and harvest crops.

## Slash and Burn Method

Slash and burn was a common method used by the Mayans when cultivating the fields. The Mayan region had a thin upper layer of soil. After two consecutive harvests, this layer was exhausted and Mayans had to abandon the field and move to another portion of the land. The abandoned field was left on its own for up to a period of five years. Then the Mayans chopped down any vegetation which grew up on it in the interim and drying vegetation was put to fire. The burnt remains of the vegetation returned to the soil minerals and nutrients required for a proper harvest. Mayans were then able to re-cultivate the field for another two consecutive years.

### Slash and burn

Also known as 'shifting', this is when jungle areas are chopped down and burnt. The ash is high in nutrients, so it was perfect for growing crops. However, within a few years, the nutrients would be used up and the farmers would have to move elsewhere to let the forest regrow.

In the dense forest, they used a slash and burn technique to create a flat surface to plant crops. They dug canals throughout the fields to irrigate the crops.

