



James Madison  
Museum

## Native American Agriculture

### Contributions

Native Americans helped the colonists survive in their new environment. They gave the colonists new crops such as squash and maize, and taught them farming methods. Crops were one of the largest contributions. "Maize" was how the Native Americans knew corn. Colonists first knew maize as "turkey wheat." This name would help to distinguish between Indian corn in the colonies and corn they had known in Europe.

Native Americans also taught the colonists a crop rotation system, which helped to preserve soil nutrients. The Native Americans had a wonderful knowledge of the natural materials in the world around them. They were able to teach the settlers about food, medicine and dyes. This information was very important to the colonists and they learned how to become farmers.



### Farming Technology

Another method used by the Native American was a technique in which rows of crops were placed closely to one another. In between the first set of crops another set would be placed. This was an efficient method saving space and making the most out of the land. The tradition of saving space and preparing it for the next generation was important to the Native Americans.



Native Americans developed another method of fertilization through the placement of fish heads in relation to the plantings. A fish head was placed alongside each crop as the rows were planted. The fish heads acted as a natural fertilizer.

JAMES MADISON MUSEUM  
129 CAROLINE ST.  
ORANGE, VA  
22960-1532

540-672-1776

The James Madison Museum is owned and operated by The James Madison Memorial Foundation. Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.

***"Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents; it was loaned to you by your children. We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children."***

***- Native American Proverb***