

## **Agriculture**

Farming and gardening are essential elements of Hopi culture. The archaeological record shows that agriculture was introduced to the northern Southwest from Mesoamerica as early as 1500 B.C. The Hopi view of agriculture, specifically corn, differs from academic interpretations. Since the emergence, this life is referred to as the fourth way of life for Hopis. As the Hopi moved from the third to the fourth way of life, they were offered corn by *Ma'saw*. The other peoples took the largest ears of corn and Hopis were left with the short blue ear. Each clan history explains how the Hopi received the short blue ear. The Hopis knew that their fourth way of life would be difficult and that they must submit to the corn as a way of life. The themes of humility, cooperation, respect, and universal earth stewardship became the life way of all Hopis. In this way, the Hopi have always had corn and agriculture.

The Hopi have been able to adapt to their arid desert climate by using different agricultural [methods](#). These methods include dry farming in the washes or valleys between the mesas as well as gardening on irrigated terraces along the mesa walls below each village. Some of the garden terraces at [Paaqavi \(Bacavi\)](#) have been in use since, approximately, A.D. 1200.

Dry farming depends completely on natural precipitation--winter snows or summer monsoon rains. Terrace irrigation is possible because of the perennial springs at each village that originally permitted settlement. Combinations of modern and traditional implements are used, such as tractors, discs, digging sticks, and hoes.

Farming and gardening in northern Arizona are high-risk activities because of cutworms, coyotes, rabbits, crows, ravens, flood, drought, and the arid climate. Agriculture is an act of faith for the Hopi that serves as a religious focus as well as an economic activity. The farm and garden plots belong to the women of each [clan](#). Working these plots provides crops unique to the Hopi diet. These agricultural activities also reinforce traditions and customs in each new generation, for as one Hopi gardener said, "This is not about growing vegetables; it is about growing kids."

## **Methods**

### **1. Flood-water farming**

Crops of corn, squash, and melons are planted in fields and in the major washes and watered as snowmelts and through summer cloudbursts.

### **2. Akchin farming**

Crops of corn, squash, and melons are planted in areas where floodwater spreads out at the mouth of an arroyo (gully). This is the most common method used by the Hopis now and in prehistoric times.

### **3. Irrigated gardening**

Crops are grown in stepped, rock-walled terraces on the sides of the mesas and irrigated by gravity fed ditches or by hand buckets.

### **4. Sand Dune Fields of Beans**

## 5. Fruit Trees

### Division of Labor

#### Men's tasks

- Clearing the fields
- Planting and maintenance of the corn
- Harvesting the corn

#### Women's tasks

- Responsible for caring of the seeds and distribution of harvest products
- Plant and gather vegetables and fruit from terraces
- Assist men in the fields

### Ceremonial Cycle

The Hopi agricultural cycle serves as a guide for their ceremonial life. The following chart lists agricultural tasks by the month and ceremonies associated with them.

To see a color chart of the Hopi Agricultural/Ceremonial Cycle, click [Color Chart](#).

To see a table of the Hopi Agricultural/Ceremonial Cycle, click [Table](#)

### Katsina Night Ceremonies

(January thru April)

#### Tasks

**February:** Clear fields

**Late March & April:** Plant early corn (Hopi sweet corn)

### Katsina Day Ceremonies

(Mid-April thru July)

#### Tasks

**May:** Plant "main" corn, melons, beans, squash

**June:** Apricots harvested (Weather Permitting)

**July:** Weeding, hoeing, thinning individual corn plants, and harvesting early corn

## **Non-Katsina Ceremonies**

**(August thru January)**

### **Tasks**

**August:** Harvest main corn and beans

**Sept.:** Harvest main corn, beans, squash, and fruits

**Oct.:** Harvest main corn and fruits

**Nov.:** Final late harvest

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