

Corn, Grain of Gods

Long before Columbus arrived, American Indians were growing corn (maize) in areas we know as Mexico and Central America. Corn is a member of the grass family of plants. By the time Columbus arrived in 1492, corn grew from Canada to the southern tip of South America. Many villages and cities were built around corn. The first English colonists in America would have starved if the Indians had not shared corn with them and shown them how to grow and use it.

American Indians planted corn in fields not much larger than gardens. All the work was done by hand. Sticks or sharp rocks were their simple tools.

Corn seeds (see "Meet the Kernel," page 3) were planted in hills or mounds, often surrounded by beans and squash.



These three important food plants were known as "The Three Sisters." The beans put nitrogen in the soil. Squash leaves helped control weeds. And every part of the corn plant was used:

- Dried kernels were beads, decorations and game markers as well as food.
- Cobs and dried stalks were fuel for fires.
- Husks became baskets, mats, mattresses, moccasins and toys.
- Silk was used to make medicine.
- Green stalks were a tasty sweet treat to chew like gum, or sometimes even a shelter from the weather.
- A perfect ear of corn was often tucked in with a new baby to wish a healthy, happy life.

Maize means "bread of life" or "grain of the gods."

Aggie's Antiques

When Aggie's nephews and nieces visited one summer they found a barn full of antique farm objects. The children couldn't imagine what some of the items were once used for. Can you match the old farm items with the correct name and use?

List six of the objects and tell what has replaced them to do the job today.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____



Grinding Wheel

Used to sharpen axes and knives



Hand Pump

Used to draw water into the house



Milk Can

Used to store milk



Wash Board

Used to wash clothes



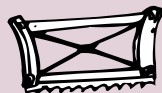
Kerosene Lantern

Used for light



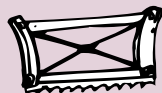
Butter Churn

Used to make butter



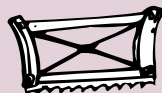
Double Tree

Used to hitch horses to a wagon



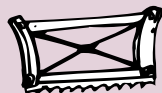
Milking Stool

Used to sit on when milking a cow



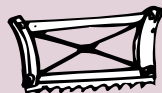
Scythe

Used to cut wheat, rye, hay and grass



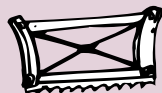
Grapple Fork and Pulley

Used to lift hay into the hay mow



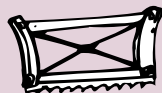
Curry Comb

Used to groom horses



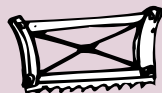
Buck Saw

Used to cut firewood



Horse Collar

Used to fasten harnesses to horses



Husking Peg

Used to husk corn from stalk