

# Aztec Chinampas: "Floating Gardens"

Answer the following questions. **Sample answers**

1. Why was it challenging for the Aztec people to grow enough food on their island settlement?

**The Aztec settlement on Lake Texcoco had a growing population. The island did not provide the space or the amount of fertile soil farmers needed to feed a growing population. It was a challenge for Aztec farmers to find the space they needed to grow crops.**

2. What were chinampas? Did these "floating gardens" really float?

**Chinampas were plots of soil Aztec farmers built on top of shallow parts of the lake. They were used to farm crops like corn, chilies, squash, and tomatoes to feed their growing population. Chinampas looked like they were floating on their own, but they were actually anchored by reeds from the bottom of the lake.**

3. What two purposes did the chinampas drainage ditches serve?

1. **The drainage ditches allowed excess water to run off the soil to avoid flooding.**
2. **The ditches also collected water-soaked mud that could be used as new soil to add on top of the planting area to replenish the existing soil.**

4. Building drainage ditches helped the chinampas farmers solve problems. Identify two additional innovative techniques chinampas farmers used and what problems those methods solved.

Farming technique	Problem it solved
Farmers planted trees at the corner of each plot of land.	The chinampas plots were held together by sturdy reeds, but trees provided additional stability. The tree's roots helped the soil not wash away.
Farmers recycled human waste from the people on the island into fertilizer for the crops.	The crops needed to be fertilized and the people on the island needed a way to dispose of human waste.

### Bonus: How do people use chinampas farming techniques today?

Research examples of how chinampas farming techniques are still being used. What parts of the world are they found in today? Have farmers made any changes to adapt to particular 21st-century needs?