

Summary: Native People in the North

The First Farmers

The earliest Florida Indians hunted, fished, and gathered wild plants for food. Later, other groups of American Indians came from the north. They came from places where people used agriculture to grow food. These Indians moved south to Florida until they came to forests and rivers. Here, they found fresh water and fertile soil. They cut trees, cleared land, and planted crops.

Farming gave people a steady supply of food, but it was hard work. Farmers had to stay near their fields to take care of their crops. So, they built small settlements near their farms. Over time, the population grew. The settlements became villages connected by trails.

Daily Life of Florida's Farmers

The Apalachee and the Timucua were farmers with similar cultures and languages. The Apalachee farming center was near the present day city of Tallahassee. The Apalachee grew most of what they ate. They made houses of palm leaves and tree bark. They stored their food in outdoor pits. Some villages had only a few houses, but others had as many as one hundred.

Chiefs ruled the villages. Their houses were on top of flat mounds. The Apalachee celebrated planting and harvesting with rituals, such as dances and ball games.

The Timucua lived to the east and southeast of the Apalachee. They included fifteen smaller groups who spoke a similar language. The Timucua planted crops, hunted, fished and gathered wild foods.

The Timucua villages were spread over a huge part of Florida. They built circular houses and a large central meeting house. Holy men called shamans led the people in religious rituals for planting and harvesting crops.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

agriculture *noun*, farming
fertile *adjective*, good for growing

crops *noun*, plants grown for food

population *noun*, the number of people living in an area

ritual *noun*, a ceremony performed for social or religious reasons

After You Read

REVIEW Why did people start to farm in Florida?

Highlight the sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW Why did the Apalachee and the Timucua build permanent villages?

Why did farmers need to be near their crops? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.