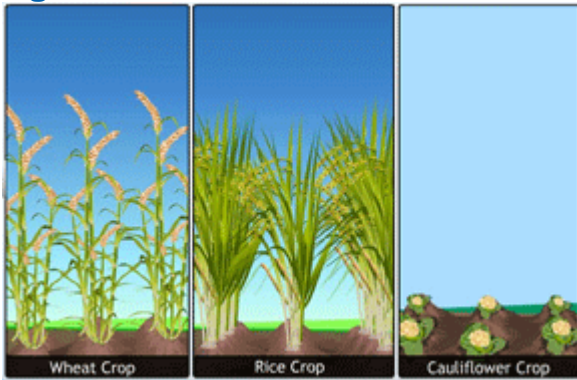


Agriculture

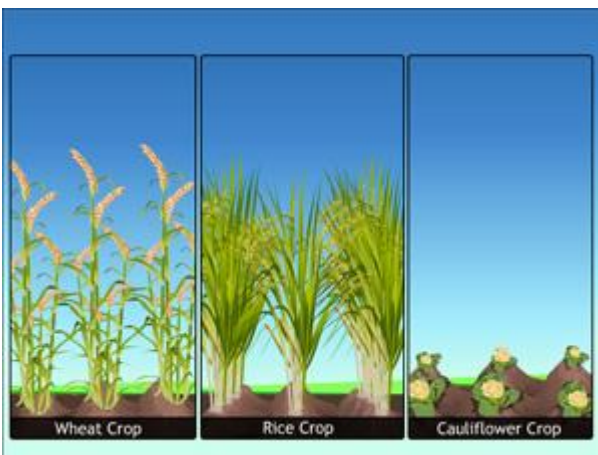


The term **crop** is used to describe plants of the same kind that are grown and cultivated at one place in significant quantities. Plants that are planted during the rainy season are called **kharif crops**. Crops that grow during the winter season are called **rabi crops**.

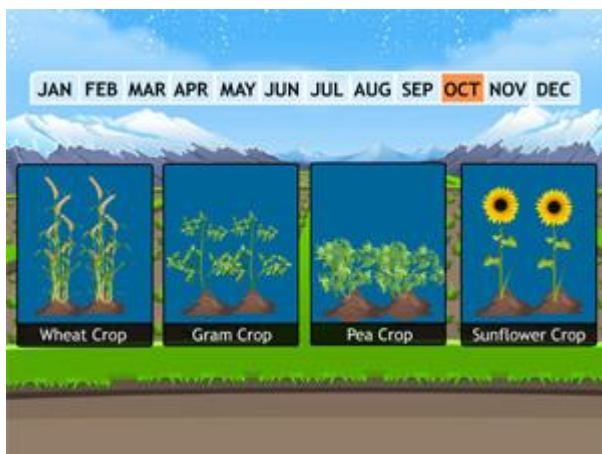
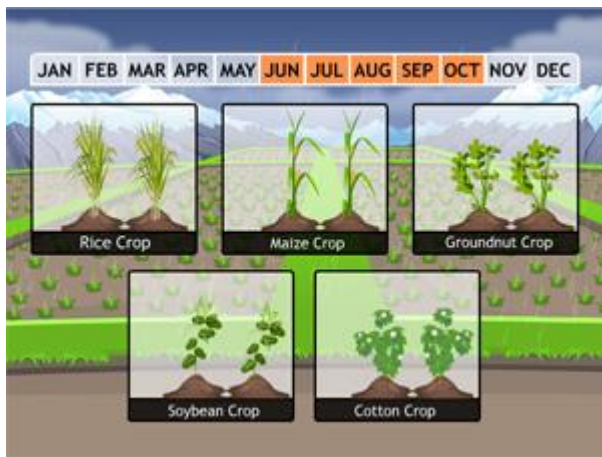
Many activities are performed before cultivating a crop, which are termed as **agricultural practices**. **Soil preparation** means **loosening** the soil or turning it. **Earthworms** decompose plant and animal waste, and thereby **benefit** the soil by increasing the humus and nutrient level in it. Ploughs have been in use since ancient times for **tilling** soil, adding manure and fertilisers, and for scraping of soil. Depending upon the animals available on a farm, **ploughing** is done using horses and camels to pull ploughs. A plank is used to break the **crumbs** into fine soil. The next step is to **level** the soil with the help of a **leveller**.

Ploughs were made from wood. Nowadays, iron ploughs have become more popular. Earlier, a **hoe** was used for tilling, but these days we use it only to remove weeds. When the **cultivator** is pulled by a tractor, the teeth assist in breaking the soil. **Healthy seeds** contain more nutrients. **Damaged seeds** are hollow, discoloured and contain fewer nutrients. **Seed selection** is done by soaking the seeds in a beaker containing water. **Modern seed drills** sow seeds at a proper depth and distance, and cover them with a layer of soil, keeping them well out of a bird's reach. The **traditional seed drill** contains a funnel-shaped container, from where the seeds pass and get placed into the soil. Bananas are first sown in an **nursery** and the saplings are planted in the field.

The term **crop** is used to describe plants of the same kind that are grown and cultivated at one place in significant quantities. A crop is a non-animal species or variety that is grown to be harvested as food, livestock fodder and fuel, or for any other economic purpose. Major world crops include maize (corn), wheat, rice, soyabean, potatoe and cotton. The term "crop" most commonly refers to plants.



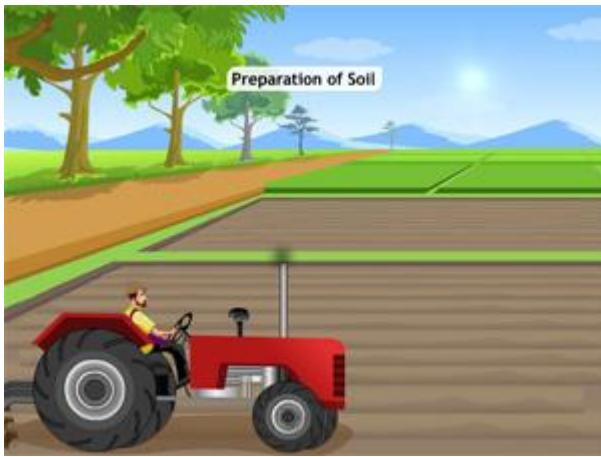
Plants that are planted during the rainy season are called **Kharif crops**. The term Kharif means "autumn" in Arabic. Crops that grow during the winter season are called **Rabi crops**. The term Rabi means "spring" in Arabic.



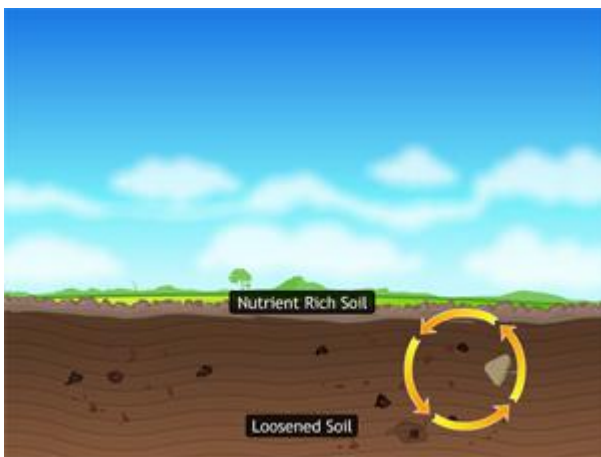
Many activities are performed before cultivating a crop, which are termed as **agricultural practices**. Agricultural practices are a collection of principles to apply for on-farm production and the post-production process, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products, while taking into account economic, social and environmental sustainability.



Soil preparation means **loosening** the soil or turning it.



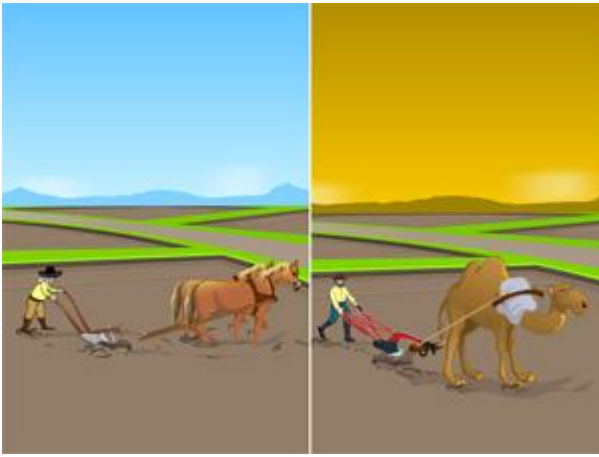
Earthworms decompose plant and animal waste, and thereby **benefit** the soil by increasing the **humus** (topsoil horizon that contains organic matter) and nutrient levels in it. Folk names for the earthworm include "**dew-worm**," "**rainworm**," "**night crawler**" and "**angleworm**" (due to its use as fishing bait). It is also called a '**friend of the farmer**'. Aristotle called earthworms the '**intestines of the earth**'.



Ploughs have been in use since ancient times for **tilling** soil, adding manure and fertilisers, and for scraping soil.



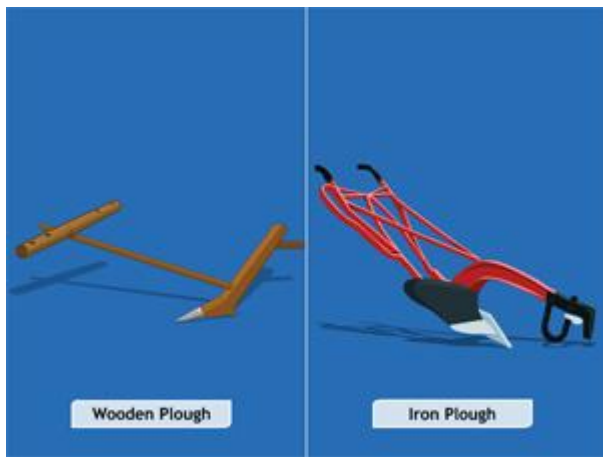
Depending upon the animals available on a farm, **ploughing** is done using horses or camels to pull ploughs.



A plank is used to break **crumbs** into fine soil. The next step is to **level** the soil with the help of a **leveller**.



Ploughs were earlier made from wood. Nowadays, iron ploughs have become more popular.



Earlier, a **hoe** was used for tilling, but these days, we use it only to remove weeds. **Weeds** are plants that grow where they are not wanted. They grow in the fields where they compete with crops for water, soil nutrients, light and space, and thus reduce crop yield. They also harbour insects, pests and micro-organisms. Certain weeds release into the soil inhibitors or poisonous substances that are harmful to plants, human beings and livestock.



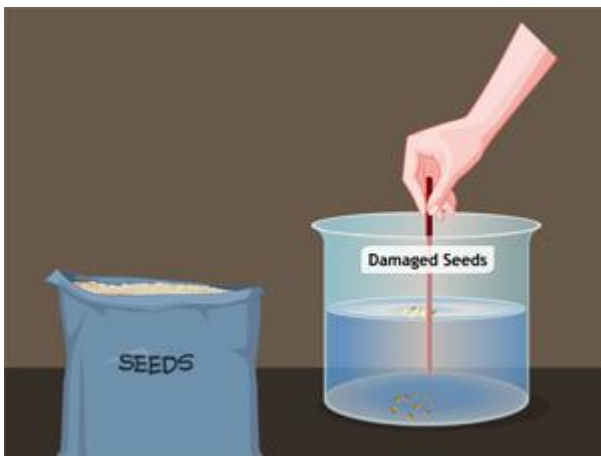
When the **cultivator** is pulled by a tractor, the teeth assist in breaking the soil. **Cultivate** means preparing the soil for growing crops, breaking the surface soil around to destroy weeds, use the soil or land for growing crops, to grow crops from seeds, shoots, etc., or to improve or develop plants by various horticultural techniques.



Healthy seeds contain more nutrients. Seed health refers to the absence of disease-causing organisms such as fungi, nematodes, bacteria, viruses and insects.



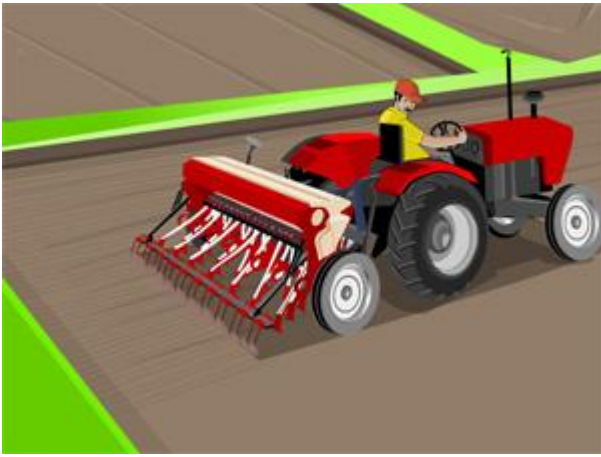
Damaged seeds are hollow and discoloured, and contain fewer nutrients.



Seed selection is done by soaking seeds in a beaker containing water. **Seed selection** is aimed at obtaining healthier seeds. It can also be used to maintain and improve the quality of the crop variety. Plants can be reserved for obtaining seeds for growing the next crop. In this way, the farmer can slowly improve the quality of his crop. The selection of plants may be based on characteristics such as the size of the plant, the colour or size of the fruits, the number of grains per ear, etc. However, selection can also be done to keep the seeds of the plants that suffered fewer attacks by insects or disease. In this way, the farmer will select at harvest time the best seeds to be kept aside for the next season. For sowing, only the very best seeds should be used.



Modern seed drills sow seeds at a proper depth and distance, and cover them with a layer of soil, keeping them well out of a bird's reach.



The **traditional seed drill** contains a funnel-shaped container, from where seeds pass and get placed into the soil.



Bananas are first sown in a **nursery**, and the saplings are planted to the field later. A **nursery** is a place where plants are propagated and grown to a usable size.

