



In Jones's soil cores, pollen tells the tale: When early Mesoamericans began cultivating crops, trees such as poisonwood were replaced by edible plants such as maize, squash, manioc, and breadnut trees. Sun-loving alders became more abundant as forests were cleared, and pest plants like ragweed and goosefoot thrived alongside the crops. Large-scale burning to clear land left bands of charcoal throughout the agricultural period. Shallower portions of the cores (not shown) bear evidence of drought, erosion, crop failure, and social collapse.

YEAR (BCE)

DEPTH (cm)

