

Agriculture Prior to the introduction of seeds to the Tlingits the primary agriculture interest centered around berries and roots. The land was suitable for gardening and the teachers encouraged the Tlingits to grow crops. It proved to be a worthwhile endeavor for the village of Hoonah.

Seeds were procured from mail-order catalogs or from Sitka. The land was cultivated by hand using rakes, shovels, and other hand tools. All foods which grew underground (like carrots, turnips, and rutabagas) were able to be grown in Hoonah. Mr. Cordle instructed the Tlingits in the procedures for the construction of a greenhouse. Cabbage, cauliflower, and other vegetables as well as flowers were grown in the greenhouse. The gardens were tended to primarily by the children. When the time came for fishing the care was assumed by teachers.

A good site for growing crops was found to be at Spaski Bay. In general, the growing season for the area was from June to August. Almost everybody in Hoonah had a garden, the largest being 225 to 450 feet. Although the vegetables were grown primarily because of the lack of fresh produce at the store, the Tlingits became quite proficient. One year some samples of Hoonah vegetables and flowers were entered in a fair held in Juneau. These samples won five first place prizes.

Fishing Fishing in the old days was mostly done by hand. The fishing was mostly done for food. They had canoes they used to travel to and from the fishing grounds. They had to take good care of the canoes because if they were not kept wet they would crack. They kept them wet by putting canvas or blankets over them and throwing water all over them. The small canoes were about two or three feet wide and about eight to ten feet long. The canoe also had names such as whale, eagle, raven, otter, moon and sun.

They fished every kind of fish. Fish were so plentiful! There was so much fish that when a canoe went over by a river they were sliding around on the fish and the people inside got wet from being splashed. About 1900 commercial fishing started. The first cannery was at Haines. It then was moved by skow to PAF about 1903. They were still using their hands and gaff hooks to catch their fish. About 1906 the canneries introduced seines and nets. These were mostly beach nets. They also had pile traps.

These pile traps are not legal anymore. Hoonah fishermen now run large modern seine boats which when lucky can catch 100,000 or more fish in one season.