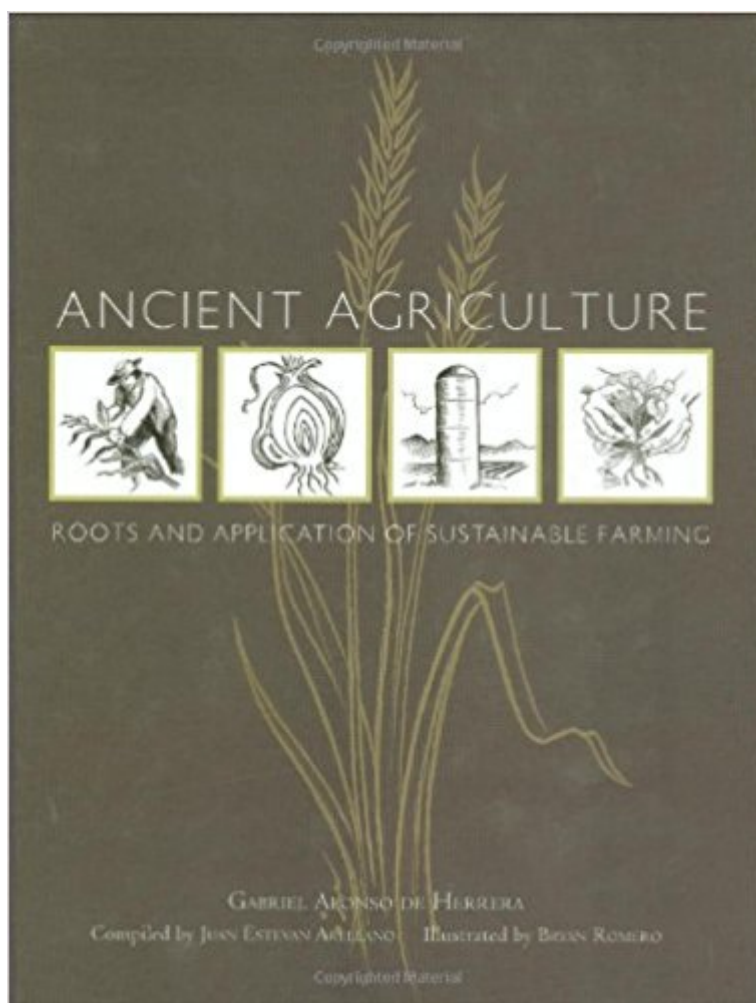


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# Ancient Agriculture: Roots And Application Of Sustainable Farming



## Synopsis

The Art of Agriculture is the first English edition of *Obra de Agricultura* by Gabriel Alonso de Herrera, an agriculture instruction manual originally written in Granada, Spain, in 1513 and published there in 1539. Herrera, widely considered the Father of Modern Spanish Agriculture, wrote this treatise nearly five centuries ago, thoughtfully recounting traditional farming techniques of the Moors before their expulsion from Spain, the Spanish colonizers in the early 1600s, and the rural Indo-Hispano bioregion spanning northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Today, farmers, gardeners, and ecological horticulturists are striving to work in harmony with nature, using traditional irrigation methods (involving acequias, sangras, and arroyos) to transform barren high-desert landscapes into fields supporting crop growth. This book speaks to today's farmers, no matter their size or output, in drought-ridden areas with land patterns characterized by natural ditches (acequias) and community water distribution systems (suertes). This type of agriculture exists not only in the American Southwest but from the Philippines to India to the Middle East. With global warming, water usage, and increased populations today, this book is more pertinent now than ever. Practical as well as philosophical, *The Art of Agriculture* will fascinate anyone interested in organic farming, sustainable agriculture, and permaculture worldwide.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Ancient Agriculture* is the first English translation of the book that carried traditional farming techniques from the Old World of Europe to the New World of the Americas. The original book, *Obra de Agricultura* by Gabriel Alonso de Herrera, was initially published in 1513 as an instruction manual

for the farmers of Talavera de la Reina in central Spain. It was revised several times as the author learned increasingly more about land use and sophisticated irrigation techniques beyond the Iberian Peninsula, which Moorish farmers of the day had blanketed in exotic fruits and vegetables.

Historically, Herrera's agricultural classic has been especially relevant in arid regions of the world, where crops are irrigated by means of ditches such as acequias, sangrías, and arroyos, which also crisscrossed the landscape of Spain at the start of the sixteenth century. Many of Herrera's planting, harvesting, and seed-saving tips have, in fact, been successfully integrated into Indo-hispanic farming practices in the southwestern United States, where drought conditions and the need for water conservation typically prevail. The present edition, *Ancient Agriculture*, has been meticulously translated, illustrated, and compiled for contemporary use. Areas of focus include working the land in harmony with nature and producing more food through soil improvement, cultivation of vineyards, and awareness of astrological influences. The interweave of ancient farming traditions and modern realities of global warming makes this treasure trove of the past a seedbed for a whole new generation of farmers and gardeners striving for agricultural sustainability.

GABRIEL ALONSO DE HERRERA, considered the father of modern-day Spanish agriculture, lived in central Spain from the time of his birth, in the 1470s, until his death, around 1540. He learned about agriculture from working in the fields of Talavera de la Reina with his father, in Granada with the Moors, studying Spanish Arabic and classical Roman texts on the subject, and traveling extensively throughout Europe. JUAN ESTEVAN ARELLANO, a journalist and farmer native to northern New Mexico, has roots reaching back to the 1725 settlement of the Embudo Valley. A poet and novelist as well, he is the 1994 recipient of Mexico's Premio Nacional de Literatura José Fuentes Mares prize.

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This is only a part of the 1513 original text "Agricultura General" by Gabriel Alonso de Herrera (the

book indicates that there will be another part published in the future) and it has no academic value. It lacks references, notes on the translation, sources of the text, data introduced in later editions and so on. While the introduction is rather interesting in terms of comparing present dry-climate American agriculture with the guidance this ancient book might offer, and the English text is reasonably good, it lacks any value as a translation since it does not adjust itself to the Spanish original: some paragraphs are missing, the book, chapter and paragraphs structure has been forgotten, and the language does not reflect the complexity of the convoluted original Renaissance Spanish. It might be a curiosity but it does not reflect the original work so its utility depends on how is going to be put to use. I bought it with an academic paper in mind but when it came to citing I finally had to do the translation myself.

This translation of the old Spanish work by Alonso de Herrera is impressive in its dedication, a jewel set together by Estevan Arellano and the translators in his team. Mr. Arellano would have wished to see the second part of this treaty on agriculture, but unfortunately passed away recently. Nonetheless, he left us this important legacy in a time in which we so much need to go back to a sustainable way of nurturing us, through nurturing the earth in a natural way inherited from the wisdom of ancient times. A must-read for those who still have the connection to Mother Earth, and for those who want to remember how it felt to be connected to her. Gracias Estevan por tu enorme contribuci3n, que descansas en paz.

a great piece of agricultural history. Very good value

It'd be tempting to place this survey under 'Home and Garden' for this review - but really, ANCIENT AGRICULTURE: ROOTS AND APPLICATION OF SUSTAINABLE FARMING deserves so much more. It'll reach an audience of farmers, gardeners, and history buffs with the first English translation of *Obra de Agricultura*, offering an early agricultural instruction manual originally written in Spain in 1513 - and holding importance for modern times. Here are insights into traditional farming techniques of the Moors before their expulsion from Spain: techniques which hold surprising relevance to modern farmers facing global warming and water shortages. Diane C.

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