

Legend of the Three Sisters

Based on the story at: www.quatr.us/northamerica/before1500/economy/threesisters.htm

Different people told different versions of this story. Here is a [Cherokee](#) version:

Once upon a time there were three sisters. The first sister was very tall and strong; her name was [Corn Girl](#), and she wore a pale green dress and had long yellow hair that blew in the wind. Corn Girl liked to stand straight and tall, but the longer Corn Girl stood in her [field](#), the hungrier she got. And every day more weeds were growing up around her feet and choking her.

The second sister was very thin and quick and fast, and her name was [Bean Girl](#), but she wasn't very strong. She couldn't even stand up on her own. She was good at making [food](#), but she just had to lie there stretched out on the ground, and she would get dirty and wet, which wasn't good for her. The weeds bothered her too because she was not strong enough to keep them away.

The third sister, [Squash Girl](#), was short and strong. She liked to wander along the ground. She wore a yellow dress. She was stronger than the weeds and so they did not bother her. But the strong sun scorched her leaves. She was hungry too.

For a long time, the sisters didn't get along. They each wanted to be independent and free, and not have anything to do with the other two. So Corn Girl stood there with her feet hurting and got hungrier and hungrier. And Bean Girl lay there on the ground fighting the weeds without success, and just got dirtier and wetter. And the little sister Squash Girl was hot and hungry too.

So Bean Girl talked to her sister Corn Girl and said, "What if I feed you some good food, and you can hold me up so I don't have to lie on the ground and get all dirty?" And Corn Girl thought that was a great idea. Then little Squash Girl called up to her tall sister, "How about if I lie on your feet and protect them from the weeds?" Corn Girl thought that was a great idea too. Bean girl needed protection from the weeds too and she offered to give Squash Girl food in return for weed protection. Both Corn and Bean Girls promised to shade Squash Girl's leaves from the hot sun.

So the Three Sisters learned to work together, so that everyone would be healthier and happier. Corn Girl helped Bean Girl stand up. Bean Girl fed Corn Girl and Squash Girl good food. And Squash Girl protected her two sisters from the weeds from growing up around them all.

And that's why the [Iroquois](#) and the [Pueblo](#) people and the [Aztecs](#) and everybody in between planted their [corn](#), their [beans](#), and their squash together in the same field - the [Three Sisters](#)

Native Americans treasured the Three Sisters for the food they provided for their people. Each sister provided meals to the people that met their nutritional needs for protein, vitamins and minerals. No Native American garden would be complete without the Three Sisters.

Some people also grew sunflowers nearby. Sunflower was sometimes called the Fourth Sister. Her large pretty flowers attracted bees and butterflies to pollinate the smaller flowers of the Three Sisters and made them more productive together. The sunflower also gave away her nutritious seeds to the birds, the animals, and, most importantly, to the people who knew to grow her next to the Three Sisters.



Legend of the Three Sisters: Corn, Beans, and Squash