In and around Lake Texcoco, the Aztecs developed an ingenious system for irrigating agriculture called chinampas. These were floating islands approximately seventeen feet long and one hundred to three hundred thirty feet wide that rested in reed frames that were anchored to the bottom of the lake. Willow trees were planted at intervals to provide shade. Approximately twenty thousand acres of chinampas were constructed [around Tenochtitlan] and the yield from them was high: four corn crops per year were possible.
"After having examined and considered all that we had seen we turned to look at the great market place and crowds of people that were in it, some buying and others selling so that the murmur and hum of their voice and words that they used could be heard more than a league (three miles) off. Some of the soldiers among us who had been in many parts of the world, in Constantinople, and all over Italy and in Rome, said that so large a market place and so full of people, and so well regulated and arranged, they had never beheld before.”

**Note:** Bernal Diaz accompanied Hernán Cortés and the other conquistadors on the 1519 encounter with the Aztecs. He wrote an extensive and informative journal of the experience.

**Source:** Bernal Diaz del Castillo: *History of the Conquest of New*