



George encouraged crop rotation to restore over-farmed soil.

George discovered ways to improve the soil and improve farming. He taught farmers to add fertilizer made from leaves, grass, and plants to the soil. George also learned that peanuts, sweet potatoes, soybeans, and cowpeas return **nitrogen**, an important nutrient, to the soil. So he encouraged farmers to plant these crops, which were also good sources of food for hungry people. George was one of the first scientists to encourage rotating crops. He told farmers to plant peanuts the first year, sweet potatoes

the second year, and cotton during the third year. This method added nutrients to the soil, which provided farmers with much larger cotton crops than before.

In Their Own Words

“They told me it was the worst soil in Alabama, and I believed them. But it was the only soil I had. I could either sit down and cry over it or I could improve it.”

—George Washington Carver, on his farming techniques



George assists his students with lab experiments.

Alabama farmers listened to George and were soon growing more crops, but they were not happy. Cotton was the only crop they could sell. Few people wanted to buy the peanut and sweet potato crops. George Washington Carver's new challenge was to find new ways to use peanuts and sweet potatoes. He knew that by inventing new products from peanuts and sweet potatoes, farmers would be able to sell these crops and earn a better living. George also knew he had a lot of work to do.

Did You Know...

Black-eyed beans also add nitrogen to soil. George encouraged farmers to grow these beans because they were a nutritious food poor families could afford.