

to this, various garden crops and some fruits were produced. The only oil available was that which was made from sesame. For this reason sesame was of great importance to the life of the people, since oil was essential for food, for soothing, for ointments, for cult, for medicine and for a thousand other things of daily life. Sennacherib tried to introduce olive trees into Assyria but without success. The principal trees cultivated were the date palm and the fig tree. There is some evidence that lemons may have been grown by the ancient Babylonians.

The land was in a great part held by the large land-holders. Naturally the best and largest estates belonged to the crown. We have a number of letters from various kings to their officers concerning the management of these estates. Next in size to the estates of the kings were those which were held by the temples. The stability of those holdings was probably more secure than that of the royal possessions. The property of king or temple might be managed by officers answering directly to them, or they might be leased to private individuals. The preferred method seems to have been to lease the lands, either for a fixed payment, which was generally made in kind and varied greatly, or on shares, in which case the owner took one third of the harvest and the tenant received the balance. In the case of land that had not formerly been planted, the contract generally ran for three years and was so drawn up that the tenant did not pay anything the first year; in the second year he paid a small percentage and in the third year he assumed full responsibility. The rights of the owner were carefully guarded by the law. The Code of Hammurabi made provision that if a man hired