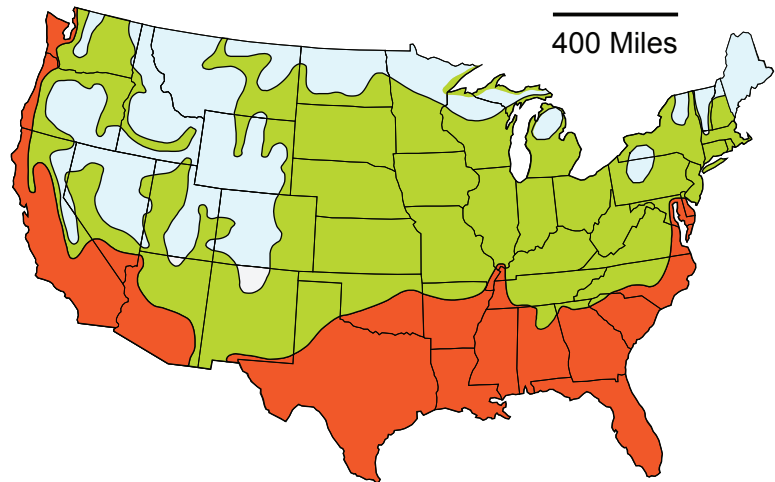
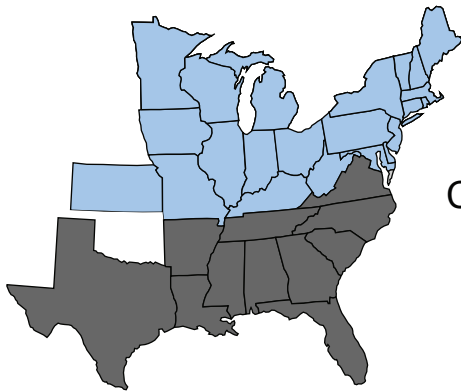
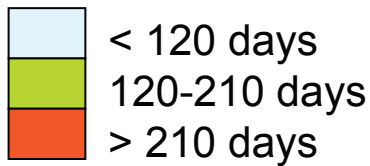


Frost-free Season



Cotton was the main crop of plantation slavery. Cotton farming requires about 200 frost-free days. Put these two facts together to explain why these states seceded to form the Confederacy (and where some of them faced pro-union resistance within their borders).

3K

Farming is difficult if the frost-free season is less than about 4 months long. There is great risk of crop damage by late spring frost or early autumn frost. If you memorize (roughly) where the 4-month line goes, you will know the northern limit of farming.

Cotton is different - it is much more valuable than corn or wheat, but it needs a longer frost-free season. Memorize where the 7-month line goes - start near Washington, DC, then go south to the Carolinas, southwest around the southern Appalachian Mountains, then north a little in the flat Mississippi Valley, and then southwest across Oklahoma and Texas.

To understand why the limit on cotton is important, read the statements below, and put an M on the line next to the one in each pair that seems to need **more** workers.

- The soil has a lot of soft **humus** (organic material), because freezing stops decay.
- The soil is harder to work, because microorganisms eat soft humus in a hot climate.
- The soil is moist and easy to dig because of melting snow in springtime.
- The soil can be very hard, almost like rock, if it is dry in springtime.
- You plant about 10,000 seeds per acre. The seeds are hard, smooth, and easy to handle.
- You plant about 20,000 seeds per acre. The seeds are fuzzy and often stick together.
- The plants are vulnerable to weed competition at first, but they soon grow tall and shade the ground. That blocks the sunlight that weeds need to grow fast.
- The plants grow slowly and do not make much shade. They are vulnerable to competition from weeds, unless someone chops the weeds down.
- Each plant has one or two big "ears," which take 5-10 seconds to harvest.
- Each plant has many small "bolls," which may take several minutes to harvest.
- After the seeds dry, it takes a few seconds to remove the outer husks from each ear.
- 32 seeds must be pulled out of each cotton boll. That takes a lot of time.

Count how often you marked the top crop in each pair. That is corn, the main crop of the North. The bottom crop is cotton. How does this help explain why cotton farmers wanted slaves?