Historians estimate that the Cyperus papyrus plant has survived along the Nile River for over 2 million years, so what did the Egyptians do with it that was so important? They used it to make the world's first form of paper. The plant grows in water and can reach around 4 to 5 feet tall. The ancient Egyptians would harvest this plant and weave several together to make a mat. Then, they would pound the mats together to create a hard, thin sheet. This sheet would then be written on for keeping notes, records, or important laws.

Over time, the Egyptian pharaohs realized how important papyrus was to their society. This made them closely guard the process by which it was created. They did not want any other civilization to copy their method. However, the world would eventually find quicker and more efficient ways to make paper. In 105 CE, paper was invented again in China from tree bark and cloth. Eventually, paper-making would reach Europe where other plant fibers and stalks were pounded at rapid speeds by trip hammers (a large hammer lifted by a simple rope and pulley method, then released to fall). Cheaper materials such as vellum (animal skin) would also be used throughout Europe which lessened the desire for the Egyptian papyrus.
THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

BOWLING

Are you surprised to learn that the ancient Egyptians invented the game of bowling? Well, they did not invent the type that we play today, but they are certainly responsible for an early form of the sport. Played in the town of Narmoutheos, around 56 miles south of Cairo, archeologists have determined that local Egyptians relaxed in a very spacious room and played a game that involved many lanes and a collection of different ball sizes. Similar to modern bowling, players competed by trying to roll their ball down the lane.

However, unlike modern bowling, the goal was not to knock down pins. Instead, there was a square opening in the center of the lane that Egyptian bowlers aimed for. There were two balls: one that was much smaller than the hole opening and one that would barely squeeze through. Opponents (or teams of opponents) stood on opposite ends of the lane and took turns throwing the small ball to score points. The person throwing the larger ball would play defense and attempt to knock the smaller ball away. Once both sides were ready, the two players who were up would throw their ball at the same time. Do you think they had automatic ball returns, like in today’s modern bowling? Not a chance! Once a ball entered the hole, participants would have to reach into the hole to fetch the ball from the sand basin below.
THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

THE 365-DAY CALENDAR

The ancient Egyptians are remembered for many inventions that have transformed how the world works. However, no other invention has had greater impact on society than the creation of the 365-day calendar. Invented more than 5,000 years ago, the calendar was first developed around the seasonal flooding of the Nile River. Egyptian astronomers began to notice that there was a link between Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, and the flooding of the Nile. They discovered that the appearance of Sirius signaled that the Nile’s annual flooding season had begun.

The Egyptians divided up their calendar into three seasons: inundation (flooding), growing, and harvest. The “opening of the year” occurred around June 21st each year on the appearance of Sirius. Once the Nile receded, the Egyptians turned to planting the fertile soil and tending their crops. Finally, the last third of their year was dedicated to harvest and food preservation. Each of the three seasons was divided into four months, with each month having thirty days. This actually only accounts for 360 days, and since Sirius appears every 365 days, the Egyptians added five extra days between harvest and inundation to account for this small difference.
THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS
TOOTHPASTE & BREATH MINTS

The Egyptians had a lot of trouble with their teeth. Living in a time with a
poor understanding of dental hygiene, bad breath and tooth decay was
everywhere! The ancient Egyptians are credited with being the first society to
conceal the unpleasant aromas that come from our mouths.

Unlike our society today, the poor teeth and
gum health of the ancient Egyptians was not
a result of sugary soft drinks and junk food.
Believe it or not, their bad teeth came from
bread. The Egyptians used stones to grind
down flour to make bread, which contributed
to sand, grit, and small rocks to become
part of the Egyptian diet. Slowly but
surely, these particles wore down tooth
enamel to expose the inner pulp of the tooth.
Soon, infection would set it in. These problems plagued all Egyptians
since archaeologists have discovered mumified remains of children with
severely worn teeth.

Despite having specialists for many other medical problems, the Egyptians did
not have dentists. The Egyptians did, however, have ways to care for their poor
dental hygiene. The Egyptians invented the first breath mints, which were a
combination of frankincense, myrrh and cinnamon boiled with honey, then
shaped into pellets. They also invented an early form of toothpaste that
contained salt, mint, flowers, and even pepper! Archeologists have even
uncovered “how-to-brush” guides that were used to teach young Egyptians how
to properly brush their teeth.
WIGS

Even in ancient Egypt people disliked losing their hair! When hair turned grey, many Egyptian used henna, a popular shrub, to dye it brown or red. Others turned to more radical, or “magical,” methods to save their greying hair such as rubbing in the blood of a black ox or the decaying remains of a donkey liver. When hair started to fall out, people would apply plant oils, animal fats, or place lettuce leaves on their heads. Needless to say these methods never worked, which prompted the invention of the wig.

Both men and women wore wigs made from real human hair, plant fibers, and sheep wool. These wigs were elaborately curled and were typically worn on special occasions and during religious ceremonies. One’s status could easily be determined by the number of wigs they had in their collection.

While some men wore wigs to disguise their baldness, it was very common for men to shave their heads anyway due to the heat and to avoid fleas and head lice.
THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

THE OX-DRAWN PLOW

Evidence suggests that the ancient Egyptians revolutionized agriculture when they invented the ox-drawn plow around 4,000 BCE. However, the first plows the Egyptians invented were barely anything memorable. In fact, they are often referred to as “scratch plows” since they were built of just wood, which made them unable to actually dig deep into the ground. This early plow relied heavily on human strength, which further contributed to its ineffectiveness.

By 2,000 BCE, plows were much improved throughout ancient Egypt. Farmers turned to bronze parts instead of wood which improved their ability to turn the soil. Just as important as the parts, this revised plow replaced manpower with oxen to supply the strength. Initially the plow was attached to the horns of the cattle, but Egyptians quickly realized this weight caused excessive strain on their animals. It did not take long for the straps of the plow to be moved to the rear of the cattle. Some communities even experimented with having laborers lead the ox-drawn plows with hoes to loosen the soil to make it even easier on their animals. Don’t kid yourself though - even though the plow changed how farming was done it was still very, very difficult work.