

Strategies to cope with drought or reduced irrigation water

1. Know how much water you have, whether from wells, irrigation districts, or both. Estimate as carefully as possible what you will need, based on past records, and monitoring water use.
2. Fix your irrigation systems so there are no leaks!
3. Decide which crops are the most valuable and grow those. Get rid of any marginal sellers.
4. Decide which field has the best water holding capacity (highest organic matter or clay content) and focus on that field.
5. Use the same field for multiple plantings. (For example, grow lettuce in the spring, followed by summer squash, followed by fall-planted radishes or onions). Using the same field allows you to save water because you will not be working with dry soil. This is a form of "Relay" cropping.
6. Choose crops wisely. Avoid high water use crops.

Crops that can tolerate reduced water :

- Brassicas – cabbage, collards, kale, mustards
- Chard
- Eggplant
- Melons - Early growth needs water, but once fruit begins to ripen, reducing water improves flavor and sugar content.
- Peppers - Chili peppers are drought tolerant. Most sweet peppers can also tolerate less water.
- Potatoes- Up to tuber set, moderate drought can increase yields. From set through sizing, water stress may reduce tuber size.
- Tomatoes: if soil moisture is held fairly constant until ripening starts. Avoid wet/dry cycles.
- Zucchini - Look for drought tolerant cultivars.

Avoid crops that do not tolerate water stress:

Corn, cucumbers, lettuces, watermelons

7. Plant intensively. Closely spaced plants shade the ground and reduce evaporation from the soil.