

We usually have a lot of humidity until April and then not a drop for nearly 6 months with temperatures of 100 F or more and the clay soil drying out and cracking within a couple of days.

What has helped most is to improve the soil quality, i.e. increase the organic content of the soil, by adding organic matter in any form you can get (mulch, compost and manure). Once the soil has sufficiently recovered it is often enough just to mulch.

I'm down to irrigating once or twice a week when my neighbors irrigate once or twice a day. This year I'm testing to see just how far I can go without irrigation: I broadcast some beans, chick peas, squash, sunflowers, corn etc. into an existing stand of weeds and grass without cutting it first. Then I covered the whole with 2 inches of mulch and drained the place in water for a few hours. After two months they are all still doing fine even though I haven't irrigated once and the sun is burning down mercilessly every day with temperatures of around 90 F. Tomatoes also do very well without irrigation for a long time once they have been established; the roots go down deeper and deeper to look for water. I found most problems with tomatoes have to do with too much water.

Veggies like cucumbers, melons etc., that need a lot of humidity, I concentrate in one place that is fairly easy to keep wet.

Dieter

Portugal