



Picking and handling tree-ripe peaches

**Center
for Agriculture**
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Jon Clements
Extension Tree Fruit Specialist
University of Massachusetts Amherst

It is not necessary to wait for peaches to soften before they are tree-ripe. Here are a few pointers for picking tree-ripe peaches, and then for handling peaches when you get them home.

When picking peaches in the orchard:

- look for the absence of green skin/background color – any green will have changed to yellow (or white if it is a white-flesh peach) when the peach is tree-ripe; if there is still some green skin, let the peach stay on the tree to ripen more
- bright red-orange skin color is a good sign of ripeness, however, it depends on the variety – some are very red-orange, some less so; a fully yellow/white background (no green) is still the best indicator of tree-ripeness on peaches that don't have as much red-orange color
- If you must squeeze the peach to assess ripeness, don't squeeze too hard, that will result in an unsightly bruise
- larger peaches ripen first and peaches in the tops of the trees also ripen first
- a ripe peach will separate from the tree easily; if the peach is difficult to pick leave it on the tree to ripen longer

Once you get your peaches home, here is the proper way to handle and fully ripen them:

- Do not leave in any kind of plastic bag if that is what you picked into
- Do not put the peaches in the sun or a hot room or car trunk – they will not ripen evenly
- Do not put them in the refrigerator unless you want them not to ripen
- Put the peaches on newspaper in a single layer not touching each other
- Check to see as they start to soften by feeling them gently – don't push hard on them or they will bruise
- When the fruit is soft, they are ripe and juicy, so ENJOY! Note this may take several days.
- This applies to peaches, nectarines, and plums too...