Picking and handling tree-ripe peaches

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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...

Thanks to my good friend Annette Bjorge, Fruit Acres Farm, Coloma, MI for peach handling tips