

The "Big Three" Early Peaches

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In the Southeast and to a lesser degree in other parts of the country, there are at present three varieties of early yellow peaches competing for highest favor among commercial peach growers. They are Redhaven, Dixigem and Jerseyland.

All three of these high class peach varieties ripen before Golden Jubilee. Normally Redhaven would come four weeks ahead of Elberta, with Dixigem about two days earlier and Jerseyland a day or so ahead of Dixigem. All have the highest dessert flavor with good shipping qualities as well. From the standpoint of fruit size, Jerseyland would probably rate first, Dixigem second and Redhaven third. If the latter is heavily pruned and thinned, however, its size would not be too small, and with irrigation could even be classed as "large".

Color Important

In the realm of color there are more significant differences. All three varieties are attractive. Redhaven tends to get quite dark red in color, when the trees are not too heavily fertilized with nitrogen. Jerseyland colors well but does not get as dark as Redhaven. It occasionally has slightly reddish flesh. Dixigem, on the other hand, carries the least red of all, but nevertheless is very attractive with its yellowish ground

color contrasted against a pinkish red blush.

Form and Freestone Characteristics

In a still different comparison, the three varieties vary from the standpoint of form. While Redhaven is almost round, Dixigem is more oval and Jerseyland somewhat pointed, especially in the more southern districts.

While all three are classed as freestones, they may occasionally "cling" somewhat, especially Redhaven. Hence commercial canners in the east will not use these varieties on a large scale, even though the quality of the canned product is exceptionally high.

Freezing Quality

Both Dixigem and Redhaven are top flight varieties for home freezing: partly as a result of their good flavor and also because they brown only slightly when exposed to the air. Jerseyland has not been sufficiently tested to evaluate its freezing and canning qualities, but indications are that it will not quite approach the high standards of the other two in that respect.

No attempt is being made here to pick the best or most promising of these three fine early peaches. All have good tree vigor and produce large crops of high quality fruit. They will rate differently in various districts. Each grower must determine which fits best into his particular production and marketing situation.