

# Ripening tomatoes off the vine

There are going to be lots of green tomatoes on the vine when frost strikes. Don't despair. With a little extra care, we can get some of our tomatoes to ripen off the vine.

Any tomatoes that are showing a pink blush will ripen off the vine. Clean these blushing fruits. Throw away any with disease spots or cracks; damaged tomatoes usually rot before ripening.

The blushing tomatoes should be placed out of direct sunlight for ripening. If placed in a sunny area, the outer skin of each tomato will redden before its inner flesh ripens and develops flavor.

Room temperatures are best. Cooler temperatures prevent the tomatoes from developing their full flavor. Higher temperatures

cause the same problem, plus increase the chance of rotting.

Set the blushing tomatoes on a sheet of newspaper, and then place another sheet over the fruits. This will trap the ripening gas, called ethylene, which tomatoes naturally emit when ripening. Some gardeners individually wrap each tomato—that's great, but it's a lot of work. Other gardeners place apples with the tomatoes since apples emit lots of ethylene.

Check the tomatoes every day or so. Immediately dispose of any tomatoes that begin to rot. And when a tomato ripens, enjoy one of the last tastes of summer.

**NDSU**  
Extension Service

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