

Features

10/1/2023

Is This Heaven?

Wendy Komanchek



When I say New Jersey, do you imagine the hustle and bustle of busy cities, highways and noise?

If you travel along northern New Jersey, you would be in for a surprise. On a sunny day, I drove through small towns and villages, as well as long stretches of country roads to visit Heaven Hill Farm in Vernon Township, New Jersey.

Nestled along protected state lands and the Appalachian Trail, Heaven Hill Farm is tucked in a rural area and serves as a respite for through-hikers and day trippers on the Appalachian Trail.

These hikers stop at Heaven Hill to grab snacks and cool drinks. They sit at picnic tables under umbrellas, their hiking gear near them. Who would ever think that hikers from a trail would stop by a garden center to get replenished?

Locals visit Heaven Hill to buy perennials, annuals, vegetables, lawn care and landscaping products. And families with young children set off to the many farm events at the garden center. By the end of July, Heaven Hill is starting to set up for its Great Pumpkin Festival, which will bring families with young children from Bergen, Passaic and Hudson Counties in New Jersey, as well as New York City families into the countryside to enjoy cider donuts, a petting zoo, learn about farming and work their way through a corn maze.

How Heaven Hill Got its Start

In 1961, the Theobald family bought the farm from John Fox, a local cattle farmer, where Heaven Hill Farm now sits. The Theobalds raised beef cattle into the late 1970s and then sold off the cattle because beef farming wasn't sustainable anymore.

In 1982, Martin Theobald, the current owner of Heaven Hill Farm, started growing produce and set up a roadside tent selling fruits and vegetables. As the roadside produce stand grew, Martin bought seven more acres next to the family farm, where he put up a greenhouse and a barn. The barn now houses Harvest Hill bakery, farm market and garden center.



Martin added more greenhouses to the property as the demand grew for farm fresh produce, annuals, perennials and shrubs in the retail side of the business.

Today, Heaven Hill Farm is a busy place. The farm market has a bakery with its signature cider donuts and other baked goods, candy, snacks, cold drinks, wine, fresh produce and homemade ice cream.

The garden center, meanwhile, sells annuals, hanging baskets, houseplants, perennials, shrubs and trees, as well as organically raised starter plants and herbs. They continue selling the summer stock until the end of

August when the locals stop planting for the year. Kathy Andresen, a long-time employee who handles the events side of the business, said that in the fall, the garden center will sell cole-crop vegetables, such as kale, broccoli, cabbage and beans.

Kathy offers two rumors about how Heaven Hill Farm got its name:

- Heaven Hill Farm is at the bottom of the Appalachian Mountains, where the Stairway to Heaven is, so it only makes sense that it would get the name Heaven Hill. This is also the preferred rumor among the staff.
- Heaven Hill Farm was named after the bourbon with the same name, Heaven Hill.

Heaven Hill Farm 41 Years Later

Under the events tab on Heaven Hill Farm's website, there are nine different events or workshops that the local community can participate in, including:

- The Great Pumpkin Festival from September through early November
- EGGstravaganza
- Taste of Vernon
- Trick or Treat Trail
- Succulent Planter Workshop
- Italian Herbs and Essential Oils
- Organic Gardening Lecture
- Succulent Plants and Essential Oils
- Gardening 101



The Great Pumpkin Festival of 2023

According to Heaven Hill's website, the Great Pumpkin Festival is the largest fall festival in northern New Jersey. From September 16 through November 5, this festival will delight families and their children with dozens of fun farm activities. The Canine Stars Stunt Dog Show will be a star attraction at the event this year.

Visitors can purchase their tickets in advance for guaranteed entry or buy at the door, and pricing is variable depending on where the tickets are bought and for what days. Visit heavenhillfarm.com to see the

pricing structure. Heaven Hill Farm's Great Pumpkin Festival will have food vendors and carnival rides in addition to a whole host of farm-related activities (see the sidebar below for the list of activities). **GP**

Wendy Komanchek has a passion for helping small- to medium-sized green industry companies succeed. She writes blogs and web copy for garden design, landscape maintenance and lawn care companies. You can learn more about her at [The Landscape Writer](http://TheLandscapeWriter.com) or email her at wendy@landscapewriter.com.

Fun-Filled Day at the Farm

Check out this list of activities at Heaven Hill Farm's Great Pumpkin Festival (you may want to add some of these for your fall fest next year!):

- Hayrides
- 40th-year, anniversary-themed corn maze
- Straw bale maze
- Hay crawl
- Barnyard Sports Ball-Cade
- Farm animals
- Chicken Little Show
- Boo Barn
- Dancing Robot Show
- Vortex Tunnel
- Obstacle Course
- Pedal cars
- Touring cars
- Skee-Ball
- Giant Straw Bale Pyramid
- Post Pounder
- Giant Sling Shot
- Spider Web Crawl
- Hippity Hop Village
- Ring Toss
- Corn Bag toss
- Log cabin build

Swings

Duck race

Bee barn

Boat racing

Hay pyramid

Pig racing

Canine Stars Stunt Dog Show