

Bearing gifts The pumpkins at Kelder's Farm are much too big for your picnic basket.



Orange crush

Boost your trick-or-treater's seasonal spirit—as well as your own—at one of these nearby gourd gardens.

By **Lisa A. Phillips**

As Linus knows only too well, pumpkin patches don't always yield something Great. On October weekends, suburban pick-your-own farms tend to be crowded and noisy, with diesel fumes from tour buses ruining any hope of fresh country air. But you needn't, er, squash your child's dreams just yet: We found three appealing alternatives to the typical harvest hell, all within two hours of the city.

The world's tallest garden gnome, Chomsky, stands sentry at the entrance to **Kelder's Farm**. Operating in New York's Rondout Valley since 1836, Kelder's offers all the classic fall farm amusements: a petting zoo, hayrides and a corn maze. But the biggest draw is a mini-golf course (\$3.25) designed by artist Maria Reidelbach, coauthor of *Miniature Golf* (said to be the only book ever bound in artificial turf). The whimsical course is constructed from recycled tractor wheels and other repurposed farm implements, and it's lined with vegetables, herbs, grains and fruit that kids can pick along the way.

5755 Rte 209, Kerhonkson, NY (845-626-7137, kelderfarm.com). Daily 10am–6pm, but call ahead, as hours may change. Admission is free; prices for individual activities vary. Travel: About a two-hour drive from NYC.

With its stunning views of the Catskill Mountains and the on-site Alison Winery, the **Greig Farm** is the most elegant spread we visited. Greig's sells pick-your-own apples and fall raspberries along with pumpkins, plus a house cassis (adults only!) made from local black currants. For lunch, head to Gigi Market (a sister restaurant of the chic Gigi Trattoria in nearby Rhinebeck, New York), where the menu showcases Hudson Valley produce, cheeses and meats, and kid-friendly offerings like seasonal vegetable lasagna.

223 Pitcher Ln, Red Hook, NY (845-758-1234, greigfarm.com). Daily 8am–7pm. Check website for prices per pound. Travel: Amtrak to Rhinecliff, then take a taxi to Greig Farm. About a two-hour drive from NYC.

Van Cortlandt Manor, an 18th-century estate overlooking the Croton River, hosts the annual **Great Jack-o'-Lantern Blaze**. A walking path winds through an impressive collection of 4,000 illuminated pumpkins, designed and hand-carved by local artists (see photo, page 27). You can't pick these beauties, but the popular event, complete with spooky music and sound effects, should enthrall kids bored with the farm scene.

SRiverside Ave off Rte 9, Croton-on-Hudson, NY (914-631-8200, hudsonvalley.org). The Blaze is scheduled for 19 dates in October and will begin at 6pm on each of them. Admission prices vary with dates: \$14–\$16, children ages 5–17 \$10–\$12; under 5 free. Travel: Metro-North to Croton-Harmon, then take a taxi to Van Cortlandt Manor. About an hour's drive from NYC.