

The Democratic and Republican Parties

Are Election Night Get-Togethers a Growing or Dissipating Trend?

BY GLENN VALLACH

"What are you doing New Year's, New Year's Eve?"

These are the lyrics in a song crooned originally by Margaret Whiting in 1947 and by scores of others since, perhaps most notably Ella Fitzgerald.

Today, thousands of Americans are asking the question about another significant annual event – Election Night.

The sheer number of get-togethers on November 5 this year might surprise some, but has come to mirror other events that have drawn people to gather en masse, such as the Super Bowl.

Not unlike the rest of the country, many Putnam County residents are preparing for a par-

versations with those preparing to host or attend one. But has the idea peaked because of heated divisions of loyalty and commitment?

"The first one we hosted was eight years ago," said Dave, a Putnam Valley resident. "Originally, it was meant to be a celebration with like-minded friends and family members for a Hilary Clinton victory. It turned out to be eerily similar to some parties we attended for sports teams who ultimately lost. The night starts in jubilant expectation, hopeful emotion, and a measure of anxiety. And then it ends badly, and the air leaks out of the balloon. But there's something to be said about ex-



People have been gathering together in front of televisions and radios for

generations on Election Night to stay current with results as they trickle in. Perhaps the first example of group-watching occurred on the night of Tuesday, November 4, 1952. Approximately one-third of the American households housed a television in the early days of what was then a technological phenomenon.

The presidential race between Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower and Democrat Adlai Stevenson was anything but hotly contested, with Eisenhower victorious by landslide. But the process captured the imagination of the American viewing public with news networks using new computer forecasting technologies to predict the results based on early returns.

Generations later, the viewing spectacle has greatly expanded.

But not everyone has a yearning for cocktails named for their favorite candidates.

"You're looking for trouble," said Chris Zilli of Yorktown Heights. "I have family members who don't speak anymore to friends they've had for years because of politics. You want to put those people in the same location? You certainly should be concerned about it if you're a business or a restaurant. And if you just invite one side or the other, you run the risk of alienating half of your customers."

A casual glance at the Internet demonstrates an uneven appetite for watch festivities in general – not simply inside people's homes. There isn't a clarion call for party-goers at Putnam County bars and restaurants – at least not official events. But just south in New York City, plenty of opportunities exist for a November 5 blast. The restaurant, 230 Fifth, for instance, beckons a visit "... for an unforgettable night under the stars as we watch the votes roll in. This is the place to be for Election Night 2024. Grab a drink, settle in, and let's watch democracy in action together!"

Harlem Stage "welcomes community members, from ALL points on the political spectrum, to join us on election night... join us for food, beverages, and plenty of mutual respect... we'll join millions of Americans to watch the results come in." There's an Election Watch Party at Rodney's Comedy Club, and several others.

"I don't know anyone who is holding a party this year, but I'm sure they're out there," said Vincent Giordano, bartender at JV Lanes in Jefferson Valley on the Putnam/Westchester border. "We're certainly not doing anything here. I think these get-togethers have a chance to be confrontational."

"I'm going hunting that day," said Tim Murphy of Putnam Valley. "If I bag a deer, I'll have a party that night."

So, while election parties have certainly become standard in today's culture, they're not as universal and common as they were even a few years ago – at least according to an unscientific probing of our Putnam County neighbors.

• But a consensus of past and present revelers in the County who are proficient at the election night party event, make some recommendations:

- Turn your home into election night central with a decorative environment that will impact both those captivated by the politics and others merely interested in a party.

- Send out themed invitations marking the occasion.

- Be creative with food and drink options featuring politically-themed cocktails and state-themed snacks and desserts such as Georgia biscuits, Maine lobster rolls, and New York Cheesecake.

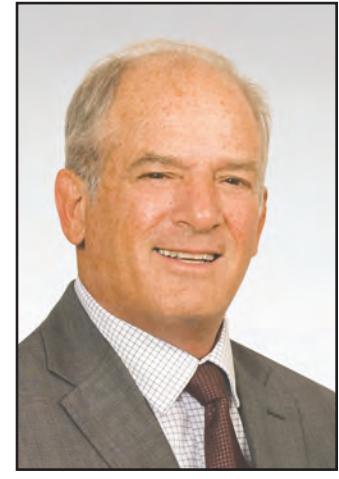
- Be aware of the intermingling of ardent democrats and republicans in the same space – it might

be wise to gather only one side or the other to avoid confrontations and uncomfortable debates.

"I've attended a couple, and they were pleasant, but I can't take it anymore," said Catherine, another Putnam County resident. "By the time election night rolls around these days, I've been subject to a thousand political ads, endless commentary, bickering, opining, and campaign lawn signs stolen and retrieved. I'm going to bed. Wake me up when somebody wins. I might consider a party days afterward – to celebrate the whole process ending. That's the only celebration I want."

Election Day is November 5. All are encouraged to vote at your local polling place.

Meet The Author



Glenn Vallach is a long-time Putnam Valley resident. His father built his home there in the 1940's and 1950's and it's been a love affair with the area ever since. Mr. Vallach is a career-long writer, public relations specialist, and raconteur, having authored corporate literature, short stories, and various articles for publication.



Javits Center – Election Night 2016

ty, and it's not the Democrat or Republican version. There is precious little data to trace the origins of such occasions, but it is safe to declare this is a phenomenon that has grown over the last few elections, based on random con-

periencing that result with others and not alone. At least for a while, there's a cathartic nature to what transitions from a party to something of a wake. Bottom line, it's a reason to have a party, and who doesn't love a party?"

Putnam County Conservationists, Homeowners Grapple with Major Threat to Beech Trees

BY CHRISTINE ZEIGER

Craig Shroeter first noticed that Beech Leaf Disease had infected trees on his property about three or four years ago, when a dark striping appeared on their leaves. Today, roughly 20-30 trees on his Putnam Valley property have the disease, and it has spread to his neighbor's land, too. When Shroeter told his neighbor this news, it took him by surprise.

"He didn't even notice his trees were dying," Shroeter said. "Now he does."

Shroeter and his neighbor aren't alone. The invasive pathogen, which targets American and ornamental beech trees, has infected tens of thousands of trees statewide since at least 2018, when it was first detected in western New York. Since then, the disease has taken a severe toll on forests, parkland and private property statewide, from the Adirondacks to Suffolk County, according to the Department of

Environmental Conservation (DEC). Symptoms of the disease first appear as a dark striping on beech leaves, which eventually shrivel up and fall off. This defoliation can cause the tree to eventually die, since leaves provide food and air for the tree through photosynthesis.

The disease can kill mature beech trees within six to 10 years and saplings in as little as two years. There is no proven treatment to save a tree once it's infected.

As Beech Leaf Disease has rampaged through Putnam County, homeowners and conservationists are considering next steps.

Shroeter, who is involved in the master gardener volunteer program through Cornell Cooperative Extension, is opting to leave his infected trees alone, and avoid dabbling in experimental treatments that may be available. He worries that if he intervened with a spray, he'd need to apply more the following year,

which could have negative effects on the environment.

"I'd be chasing my own tail," he said.

On the conservation side, the answers are no clearer. Granite Mountain Preserve in Putnam Valley is a wild landscape that protects marshy wetlands, streams, and birds. The property is also shaded by many native tree species, including the American beech.

In 2021, the Hudson Highlands Land Trust, which manages the preserve, began monitoring the spread of Beech Leaf Disease. At the time, Cory Tiger, currently Preserve Manager at the land trust, was responsible for managing private land protected through conservation easements.

"I would show [landowners] what Beech Leaf Disease looks like, and what to look out for if they didn't already have it on their property," Tiger remembers. "They would ask, 'Is this something I should be concerned about?'

The answer to that question is a resounding yes.

In New York State, the predominant forest type is beech/birch/maple, making it one of the most common tree species. They are also some of the tallest. Shooting up to 80 feet tall, they provide shade that is vital during the hottest months for hikers and wildlife alike. Birds native to our region, like chickadees and red bellied woodpeckers, all eat beech nuts. Meanwhile, wood thrushes, scarlet tanagers and other songbirds use their branches to build nests.

Sam Oliverio, 71, who grew up in Putnam Valley and still lives there, remembers that beech trees could be found everywhere during his childhood. On occasion, they even made for a tasty snack.

"I've been here all my life, and one of the things we used to do is to find a young beech tree, take a couple of leaves off and chew them because they actually tasted good, like beech gum," he remembers.

Since Beech Leaf Disease has taken hold in the Hudson Valley, Oliverio has already noticed a difference in the local landscape.

"Now, to try to find a healthy beech tree in [the valley] is very, very difficult," he says.

So, what are forest managers in Putnam County doing about beech leaf disease?

At Granite Mountain Preserve, the response has been two-pronged – aggressively planting native trees and shrubs, while also monitoring the damage.

"Our biggest takeaway is, 'If we lose our beech stands, what's going to take its place?' says Tiger. "We are making sure that we're we are preparing for that and creating more diversity in our forest."

To achieve this goal, the Land Trust has partnered with the Wildwoods Restoration Project, a non-profit based in the Hudson Valley, on a series of volunteer plantings that aim to strengthen the understory of the forest at Granite Mountain Preserve. Putnam County residents are invited to participate in these volunteer events, posted on the Wild Woods Restoration Project's website. In October, the Wildwood Restoration Project planted oak trees in an area of Granite Mountain Preserve that was heavily populated by beech.

Tiger says the land trust is also looking into applying for grants that allow them to erect exclosures that will protect open areas from deer, which eat young trees and saplings and are overabundant in the area. Meanwhile, volunteers and staff continue to monitor the spread of Beech Leaf Disease at Hudson Highlands Land Trust properties.



Striping on leaves is a symptom of beech leaf disease.

Photo by John Zeiger

Treatments

There is currently no proven way to save trees infected by Beech Leaf Disease.

Jennifer Lerner, Senior Resource Editor at the Cornell Cooperative Extension in Putnam County, cautions homeowners against taking matters into their own hands, and spraying pesticides as a knee-jerk reaction. She points out that pesticides are risky because currently there are none specifically labeled to kill the nematode that is causing Beech Leaf Disease.

"If you're trying something where no efficacy data is available, you could essentially be putting a pesticide out into the environment that may do nothing except threaten other organisms, including humans," she said.

When homeowners contact the Cornell Co-Op, Lerner suggests that they examine the stresses their tree may be under. If the tree is in extreme drought, you might consider watering it, or removing competing vegetation, like weeds or brush. The idea is that the healthier a tree is, the more likely it will be to fight off a pathogen.

What landowners can do/get involved

As conservationists await a proven treatment to save trees from Beech Leaf Disease, Putnam residents can still get involved in the fight to improve forest health. Lerner points to efforts put forth by the Lower Hudson Partnership for Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM), which surveys the spread of invasive species (like Beech Leaf Disease) in the region. For more information on how to get involved, visit: lhprism.org/ volunteer opportunities. Homeowners are also advised to plant trees and shrubs native to our region whenever possible. A complete list of recommended plants, which include highbush blueberry, oak trees, big bluestem, blue flag iris and Virginia rose, can be found at lhprism.org/PlantWiseBrochure. We may not be able to save beech at the moment, but this work can help us protect the overall health of local ecosystems.



Putnam Valley resident Craig Shroeter plants a native plant at Granite Mountain Preserve.