

Sunlighting —not Moonlighting

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The pandemic has been traumatic in so many ways, but it has also offered many people a chance to spend more time at home with their families and enabled many to get out into the garden to relieve stress, grow and eat fresh food, and save money. If we take a deeper dive we can call this “Sunlighting” – the opposite of Moonlighting. This was a big deal. Surveys suggest more than 20 million novice gardeners headed out to the garden in 2020. The brought the number of American gardeners past 60 million. That is a movement!

This is not a new concept. Jack Goody's studies of sunlighting in Ghana offer a rather hopeful view of what may occur. At independence, Ghana, the former British colony of the Gold Coast, was the world's largest producer of cocoa and had about \$1 billion in reserves. In 1983, after 26 years, five military coups, and two years of drought Ghana hit bottom. Cocoa production declined in the 1960s and 1970s, and the sector nearly collapsed in the early 1980s.

When Jack was working there Ghana had maintained a good educational system, but students with high degrees had few options except the government. The payroll blossomed. Yet a decline in government revenues and inflation meant salaries failed to keep up with the cost of living. Sound familiar? Civil servants fainted at their desks from hunger.

Everyone who could set out to supplement their government salary by managing their home garden and fruit trees for food and fuel. They did this by going home at noon to work on the garden. It worked very well and may become even important here in the U.S. as we come to terms with pandemics, supply chain failures, and national debts, both economic and ecological.

Jack Goody. 1987. Sunlighting in Ghana, presented at the Society for Economic Anthropology Conference: Food and Farm, Riverside, CA.

David A. Bainbridge. 2015. Gardening with Less Water. Storey.

David A. Bainbridge. 2011. Sustainable Communities. pp. 239-237. In Passive Solar Architecture. Chelsea Green.

"... ere long the most valuable of all arts will be the art of deriving a comfortable subsistence from the smallest area of soil. No community whose every member posses this art can ever be the victim of oppression in any of its forms." Abraham Lincoln, 1859