

Solar Hot Water

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Out with the Old and In with the New

I was doing research for an article on alternative energy when I discovered an interesting fact. From the 1890s through 1910, thousands of Americans used solar water heaters to heat water for their homes. But as soon as natural gas became available, as a relatively cheap, new alternative, solar systems were abandoned.

Now, a century later, we are investing our time and money into solar technology. Why did we have to wait so long? What if we'd been improving the technology for the last hundred years? How far would we have come?

And then, I thought about western medicine. We turned our backs on centuries of wisdom. Eastern medicine was discounted as foolishness. Home remedies used for generations were labeled as dangerous or ineffective. Again, something new—antibiotics—replaced the old.

What about food? Modern agriculture? The “green revolution,” using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, did indeed increase yields. But at what cost? For thousands of years we replenished the soil with manure and compost. But the new method replaced the old. And now our fields, the lifeblood of our crops, are stripped of nutrients and contaminated with poisons. So what do the big agricultural businesses do? Do they look to the past and embrace the wisdom of those who came before us? No. They create genetically modified plants and contaminate the entire food chain with poorly or virtually untested unnatural food.

If we are to find solutions to the problems we face

today—depletion of fossil fuels, world hunger, global warming, clean water, pollution, and more, we need to embrace the wisdom of the past, while we look to the future.