

Birthstones

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JANUARY

Garnet



Overview: Garnets are a set of closely related minerals that form a group, resulting in gemstones in almost every color. Color variations are caused by the presence of different trace elements and often have specific variety names.

History and Lore: Necklaces studded with garnets adorned the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. In ancient Rome, signet rings with carved garnets were used as seals to stamp the wax that secured important documents.

Major Sources: Afghanistan, Brazil, India, Iran, Kenya, Myanmar, Namibia, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania

Mohs Hardness: 6.5 to 7.5

Care and Cleaning: Clean using warm, soapy water. An ultrasonic cleaner is usually safe except for stones that have fractures. Steam cleaning is not recommended.

FEBRUARY

Amethyst



Overview: Amethyst is the purple variety of the mineral quartz. It's the gem most commonly associated with the color purple. The purple can be cool and bluish, or a reddish purple that's sometimes referred to as "raspberry."

History and Lore: "Amethystos" means "not drunk" in ancient Greek. Because of its wine-like color, early Greek legends associated amethyst with Bacchus, the god of wine. It was believed that wearing amethyst prevented drunkenness.

Major Sources: Brazil, United States, Uruguay, Zambia

Mohs Hardness: 7

Care and Cleaning: Clean with warm, soapy water. Ultrasonic cleaners are usually safe except in rare instances where a stone is dyed or treated by fracture filling. Steam cleaning is not recommended; do not subject to heat.

MARCH

Aquamarine



Overview: Aquamarine is the light green-blue to blue variety of the mineral beryl. It is generally light to medium in tone. Aquamarine's most valuable color is a vibrant, medium blue to slightly greenish blue.

History and Lore: The name "aquamarine" is derived from two Latin words: aqua, meaning "water," and marina, meaning "of the sea." It has been said that the mineral beryl gives the wearer protection against foes in battle or litigation.

Major Sources: Brazil, Pakistan, United States, Uruguay, Zambia

Mohs Hardness: 7.5 to 8

Care and Cleaning: Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are usually safe unless the stone has liquid inclusions or fractures. Fracture-filled gems should only be cleaned with warm, soapy water.

APRIL

Diamond



Overview: Diamond is the only gem made of a single element. It is typically about 99.95 percent carbon. The other 0.05 percent can include one or more trace elements. Some trace elements can influence its color or crystal shape.

History and Lore: Over the centuries, diamond was thought to be an antidote to poison; a protection against the plague; and to assure longevity, strength, beauty and happiness. It is now the universal symbol of love.

Major Sources: Australia, Botswana, Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo, Russia

Mohs Hardness: 10

Care and Cleaning: Clean by wiping it with a lint-free cloth; or use warm water, mild soap and a soft toothbrush or a commercial jewelry cleaning solution.

MAY

Emerald



Overview: Emerald is the green to bluish green variety of the mineral beryl, colored by trace elements of chromium and vanadium. The most desirable emerald colors are bluish green to pure green with strong to vivid color saturation and medium to medium-dark tone.

History and Lore: From Egyptian pharaohs to Inca emperors, emerald has enchanted royalty for more than 6,000 years. Emeralds from Colombia that the Spanish Conquistadors brought back to Europe helped popularize the gem.

Major Sources: Afghanistan, Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Madagascar, Pakistan, Russia, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Mohs Hardness: 7.5 to 8

Care and Cleaning: Use warm soapy water with gentle scrubbing. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are not recommended.

JUNE

Alexandrite



Overview: Alexandrite is a very rare color change variety of the mineral chrysoberyl. The most-prized alexandrites show a vivid green to bluish green in daylight and fluorescent light, and an intense red to purplish red in incandescent light.

History and Lore: Discovered in 1830 by miners in the Ural Mountains of Russia, these red to green color-changing stones resembled the colors of Imperial Russia's national military. The find was named "alexandrite" after the Russian Emperor Alexander II.

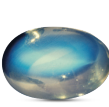
Major Sources: Brazil, Madagascar, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania

Mohs Hardness: 8.5

Care and Cleaning: Warm, soapy water is always safe for cleaning alexandrite. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are usually safe except in the rare instances where a stone is treated by fracture filling.

JUNE

Moonstone



Overview: Moonstone is a variety of the feldspar-group mineral orthoclase. The strength and color of moonstone's sheen, its body color and clarity are the most important value factors.

History and Lore: According to Hindu mythology, moonstone is made of solidified moonbeams. It was also thought to bring good fortune.

Major Sources: India, Madagascar, Sri Lanka, Tanzania

Mohs Hardness: 6 to 6.5

Care and Cleaning: Clean using warm, soapy water only. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are never recommended.

JUNE

Pearl



Overview: A pearl is an organic gem that grows inside saltwater and freshwater mollusks. Pearl bodycolor varies by the type of mollusk it is formed in. The vast majority of pearls sold are cultured – a product of human intervention; natural pearls are exceedingly rare.

History and Lore: Natural pearls have been coveted for thousands of years. The spherical shape of some pearls led many cultures to associate them with the moon. In ancient China, pearls were believed to guarantee protection from fire and fire-breathing dragons. In Europe, they symbolized modesty, chastity and purity.

Major Sources:
• Akoya pearls: China, Japan
• South Sea pearls: Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines
• Tahitian pearls: the islands of French Polynesia
• Freshwater pearls: China, United States

Mohs Hardness: 2.5 to 3

Care and Cleaning: Since pearls are relatively soft, take special care when wearing or displaying them. For routine care, wipe pearls with a clean, dry, soft cloth after each wearing. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are not recommended. It is safe to use warm, soapy water for occasional thorough cleaning. Do not store in air tight areas for prolonged periods of time.

JULY

Ruby



Overview: Ruby is the red variety of the mineral corundum and its color is caused by traces of chromium. Color is the most significant factor affecting a ruby's value. The most sought-after color by collectors worldwide is a deep red sometimes with a hint of purple, called "pigeon's blood" in the trade.

History and Lore: Early cultures valued rubies for their similarity to the redness of the blood that flowed through their veins, and believed rubies held the power of life. Many medieval Europeans wore rubies to guarantee health, wealth, wisdom and success in love.

Major Sources: Afghanistan, Greenland, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam

Mohs Hardness: 9

Care and Cleaning: Cleaning with warm, soapy water is always safe. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are usually safe for untreated, heat-treated, and lattice diffusion-treated stones. Fracture-filled, cavity-filled or dyed material should only be cleaned with a damp cloth.

AUGUST

Peridot



Overview: Peridot's color ranges from yellowish green to greenish yellow. The most favored peridot color is a richly saturated pure grass green without any hint of yellow or brown.

History and Lore: Peridot has always been associated with light. Some believed that it protected its owner from "terrors of the night," especially when it was set in gold. Others strung the gems on donkey hair and tied them around their left arms to ward off evil spirits.

Major Sources: China, Egypt, Myanmar, Pakistan, Tanzania, United States, Vietnam

Mohs Hardness: 6.5 to 7

Care and Cleaning: Clean only with warm, soapy water. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are never recommended.

AUGUST

Spinel



Overview: Spinel comes in a rainbow of colors caused by various trace elements. Red, pink, lilac and blue are considered the most commercially important and available. The most valued spinel colors are bright red, cobalt blue, and vivid pink and orange.

History and Lore: The name spinel comes from the Latin "spina" meaning "thorn," which refers to the shape of spinel crystals. Red spinel has often been mistaken for other gemstones, especially ruby.

Major Sources: Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Vietnam

Mohs Hardness: 8

Care and Cleaning: Cleaning with warm, soapy water is always safe. Although ultrasonic cleaners and steam cleaners are usually safe, certain inclusions like fractures could pose a potential problem.

SEPTEMBER

Sapphire



Overview: Sapphire is a member of the mineral species corundum. The rich hues of blue sapphire are universally known but fancy sapphires come in many colors including pink, yellow, purple, colorless, black, green and rare pinkish orange.

History and Lore: Sapphire comes from the Greek word "sappheiros," which means "bright blue stone" and has been cherished for thousands of years for its color, durability, hardness and luster. Early Buddhists believed in its power for spiritual awareness.

Major Sources: Australia, Cambodia, China, Kashmir, Kenya, Madagascar, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United States, Vietnam

Mohs Hardness: 9

Care and Cleaning: Warm, soapy water is always safe. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are usually safe for untreated, heat-treated and lattice diffusion-treated stones. Fracture-filled, cavity-filled or dyed material should only be cleaned with a damp cloth.

OCTOBER

Opal



Overview: Opals display a phenomenon known as play-of-color. When a stone has play-of-color, it is referred to as precious opal. The most valuable opals display play-of-color from all angles, across the entire stone, in the full range of hues from red through blue.

History and Lore: The name opal comes from the Latin "opalus" that was synonymous with "precious stone" in ancient Rome. The ancient Greeks believed opals gave their owners the gift of prophecy and guarded them from disease. For Europeans, it has been a symbol of hope, purity and truth.

Major Sources: Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Mexico, Peru, United States

Mohs Hardness: 5 to 6.5

Care and Cleaning: Clean only with warm, soapy water. Do not expose to heat or excessive dryness, which can lead to internal cracks known as "crazing".

OCTOBER

Tourmaline



Overview: Tourmaline comes in a wide range of colors that vary in intensity and tone. Very few gems match tourmaline's dazzling range of colors, and it was easily confused with other gems until the development of modern mineralogy.

History and Lore: Egyptian legend has it that tourmaline gathered all the colors while travelling along the rainbow, thus giving its name, which means "a gem of the rainbow."

Major Sources: Brazil, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Tanzania, United States, Zambia

Mohs Hardness: 7 to 7.5

Care and Cleaning: Warm, soapy water is the best method for cleaning tourmaline. The use of ultrasonic and steam cleaners is not recommended.

NOVEMBER

Citrine



Overview: Citrine is the transparent, pale yellow to brownish orange variety of quartz and is quite rare in nature. The most popular shade is an earthy deep brownish or reddish orange. The finest citrine color is a saturated yellow to reddish orange free of brownish tints.

History and Lore: The name citrine comes from the French "citron" and Latin "citrus" meaning lemon-colored. Naturally colored citrine is rare, and today most citrine quartz is the result of heat treatment of amethyst quartz.

Major Sources: Bolivia, Brazil, Madagascar, Mexico, Spain, Uruguay

Mohs Hardness: 7

Care and Cleaning: Cleaning with warm, soapy water is always safe. Ultrasonic cleaners are usually safe except in the rare instances where a stone is dyed or treated by fracture filling.

NOVEMBER

Topaz



Overview: Topaz features a variety of colors, from colorless, light blue, green, yellow, red, orange, pink, violet to brown. A vivid purplish pink color is one of the most rare and sought after colors. Blue topaz and colorless topaz are widely available and very affordable.

History and Lore: Topaz was as a symbol of strength among the ancient Greeks. Europeans at the time of the Renaissance believed in its power to destroy curses and dispel anger. "Topaz" comes from the Sanskrit word "tapas" that means "fire."

Major Sources: Brazil, Madagascar, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, United States

Mohs Hardness: 8

Care and Cleaning: Clean with warm, soapy water. Avoid ultrasonic or steam cleaners.

DECEMBER

Tanzanite



Overview: Tanzanite is the blue to bluish purple variety of the mineral zoisite. The most prized is a pure blue color or an intense violet-blue. Viewed at different angles, tanzanite's hue may appear violet.

History and Lore: Named by Tiffany & Co. after Tanzania, the country in which it was discovered in 1967, tanzanite continues to enjoy its growing popularity. Tanzanite is found commercially in only one place on Earth, making it many times rarer than diamonds.

Major Source: Tanzania

Mohs Hardness: 6 to 7

Care and Cleaning: Clean using warm, soapy water. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are never recommended.

DECEMBER

Turquoise



Overview: Turquoise ranges from blue to green in color. The most prized color is an even, intense medium blue. Generally, pure saturated blue shades are the most valuable. The most valuable turquoise is an even medium blue with no matrix and the ability to take a polish.

History and Lore: Turquoise is one of the world's most ancient gems. Archaeological excavations revealed that the rulers of ancient Egypt adorned themselves with turquoise jewelry, and Chinese artisans carved it more than 3,000 years ago.

Major Sources: China, Egypt, Iran, Mexico, United States

Mohs Hardness: 7 to 7.5

Care and Cleaning: Clean using warm, soapy water. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are never recommended. Heat, chemicals, cosmetics and even skin oils or perspiration can discolor or damage treated turquoise.

DECEMBER

Zircon



Overview: Zircon occurs in an array of colors: yellow, green, red, reddish brown and blue hues. Colorless zircon is known for its brilliance and flashes of multicolored light, called fire. These zircon properties are close enough to the properties of diamond to account for centuries of confusion between the two gems.

History and Lore: In the Hindu religion, zircon alternates with hessonite garnet as one of the nine gems of the navaratna. When worn together, the nine gems protect the wearer and bring good health, wealth and wisdom.

Major Sources: Australia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam

Mohs Hardness: 6 to 7.5

Care and Cleaning: Clean with warm, soapy water. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are not recommended.

Care and Cleaning: Many gems can be subjected to treatments to enhance their color and clarity. Cleaning methods may vary depending on the presence or type of treatment.

GIA® reports are available for diamonds, colored stones and pearls, and provide important information including grading, identification and detectable treatments.

Learn more about birthstones and other gems at [GIA.edu/gem-encyclopedia](https://www.gia.edu/gem-encyclopedia)

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