



GEMSTONES

"THE FLOWERS OF THE MINERAL KINGDOM"

As colorful as the rainbow and more sparkling than fine leaded crystal, gemstones have captured the imaginations and desires of men and perhaps especially women for ages. The pursuit of gems have become the subject of legends, fairy tales, epics, and major motion pictures ("Romancing the Stone", for one). Today, fine gemstone specimens are available to the average person more so than at any time in history.

What makes a gemstone?

Generally speaking, a gemstone is a naturally occurring mineral that is beautiful, rare, and durable (resistant to abrasion, fracturing, and chemical reactions). Some minerals can be very beautiful, but they may be too soft and will scratch easily (such as the mineral Apatite). Others are too common and are given a semi-precious status (such as rock crystal). Fluorite is extremely colorful and pretty but has a hardness of only 4 on the Moh's hardness scale, and has four perfect cleavage directions, which makes it only an oddity as a cut gem. All gemstones have some characteristics falling short of perfection; even the seemingly indestructible Diamond has four directions of cleavage.

Most gems are silicates which can be very stable, hard minerals. A few gems are oxides and only one gem, diamond, is composed of a single element, carbon. There are also a few gemstones are not true minerals but are included here: opal, amber, and moldavite. Below is a list of some of the gem kingdom's most prized members:

Gemstones in the Elements class:

- DIAMOND

Gemstones in the Oxides class:

- CORUNDUM
 - RUBY
 - SAPPHIRE
- CHRYSOBERYL
 - ALEXANDRITE
 - YELLOW-GREEN CHRYSOBERYL
 - CAT'S EYE
- SPINEL

Gemstones in the Silicates class:

Birthstones

- **January:** Garnet or Rose Quartz
- **February:** Amethyst or Onyx
- **March:** Aquamarine or Bloodstone
- **April:** Diamond or Rock Crystal (Quartz)
- **May:** Emerald or Chrysoprase
- **June:** Alexandrite or Moonstone or Pearl
- **July:** Ruby or Carnelion
- **August:** Peridot or Sardonyx
- **September:** Sapphire or Lapis
- **October:** Opal or Tourmaline
- **November:** Topaz or Citrine
- **December:** Zircon or Turquoise

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Interesting Groupings of Minerals

Choose from these groups:

- **Birthstones:** Lists the commonly recognized birthstones.
- **Gemstones:** Includes gem varieties of minerals.
- **Biblestones:** Minerals referenced in the Bible.
- **Natural Groupings:** Natural associations such as pegmatities, vugs, etc.
- **Significant Element:** Includes ores of metals such as lead or beryllium.
- **Minerals that Twin:** These minerals may form *twinned* crystals.

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Mineral Classes

Minerals are traditionally organized according to chemistry into the following classes:

- **Elements Class:** The Native Elements.
- **Oxides Class:** The Oxides and the simple Hydroxides.
- **Sulfides Class:** The Sulfides and the Sulfosalts.
- **Halides Class:** The Fluorides and Chlorides.
- **Carbonates Class:** The Carbonates and the Borates.
- **Sulfates Class:** The Sulfates, Chromites, Molybdenates and Tungstates.
- **Phosphates Class:** The Phosphates, Arsenates and Vanadates.
- **Silicates Class:** The Silicates (the largest class).
- **Mineraloids Class:** The Minerals which are not true minerals!

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