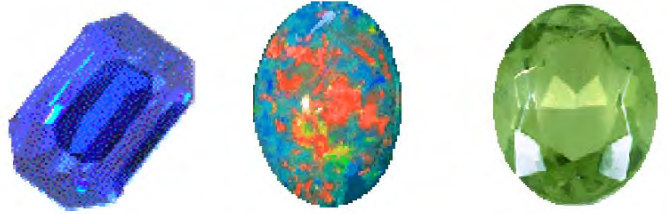


GEMSTONES

America's Mineral Heritage includes gemstones. Many gems are found in the United States, and they are wonderful and colorful.

In what month were you born? _____

What is your birthstone? _____



Nearly everyone knows their birthstone! Birthstones are special minerals, usually of spectacular beauty, and most often they are harder than other stones so that they wear well. (The birthstone, Pearl, technically is not a mineral since it is of animal origin, coming from Oysters, Mussels, or clams.) Geologists use a scale of hardness called Moh's Scale. Gems are usually of hardness 7 and greater on a scale of 1-10.

List any gemstones that you know are found near your home: _____

Garnet May be found in many states: Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, and most western states.

Amethyst Occurs in Arizona, Colorado, and Georgia, Nevada, and other states.

Aquamarine's Spectacular crystals continue to come from Mt. Antero in Colorado.

Diamonds Yes, they are found in the U.S.! Mining was active in Colorado until a few years ago, and you may visit the Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro, Arkansas and try your hand at finding a diamond yourself.

Emeralds Wonderful stones come from North Carolina.

Pearl The bulk of cultured U.S. freshwater pearl production comes from Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, and Louisiana.

Moonstone A type of the mineral orthoclase is found in New Mexico and Virginia.

Ruby North Carolina produces some Rubies.

Peridot Arizona is notable and also other states having volcanoes, like Hawaii.

Sapphire Montana has mines where you can dig for a fee.

Opal Nevada's Virgin Valley is well known, as is Spencer, Idaho.

Topaz California, Colorado, New Hampshire, Texas, and Utah produce this gem.

Turquoise Again, found in the Southwestern states, particularly Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

The "Star" type of garnet, opal, and turquoise are polished into smooth-topped stones. Pearls are left in their natural shape of origin. The others are faceted, forming flat surfaces on the stone to enhance its beauty.

Young people are encouraged to learn more about minerals and especially gemstones. Visit your local library or purchase books. Another alternative is to search the Internet for information on gemstones. Find out more about hunting gemstones. Learn more about these exquisite stones. You might even want to join a local Gem & Mineral & Fossil Club where members can help you. Everyone is a beginner at some point!



Mineral Reference Books: These are better for a beginner and relatively less expensive than more comprehensive books not listed here.

Audubon Society Field Guide to N. American Rocks and Minerals, Charles Chesterman

Bantam Science Books, Rocks and Minerals, by Joel Arem, Ridge Press Books

Dana's Minerals and How To Study Them, by Edward S. Dana and Cornelius Hurlbut Jr.

Eye Witness Handbook of Rocks & Mineral, Pellant

Golden Nature Guide, Rocks and Minerals, by Herbert S. Zim, Golden Press

Minerals of the World, A Guide to Field Identification, Sorrell & Sandstrom

Mineral, Rocks, and Precious Stones, Dr. Jaroslav Bauer

Peterson's Field Guide, Rocks and Minerals, by Dr. F. H. Pough

Simon and Shuster's Guide to Rocks and Minerals, Mottana et al



Gemstone Reference Books:

Eyewitness Handbook, Gemstones, Cathy Hall

Gems and Jewelry, Joel Arem

Simon and Shuster's Guide to Gems and Precious Stones, Curzio Cipriani, Allesandri Borelli

Different lists of birthstones have been used over the years and the change a little bit with time.

Here is a list with alternates:

January	Garnet	Tanzanite	Rose Quartz
February	Amethyst	Tourmaline	Onyx
March	Aquamarine	Bloodstone	
April	Diamond	Nephrite	Quartz
May	Emerald	Agate	Chrysoprase
June	Pearl	Alexandrite	Moonstone
July	Ruby	Onyx	Carnelian
August	Peridot	Sardonyx	
September	Sapphire	Malachite	Lapis
October	Opal	Tourmaline	
November	Topaz	Rubellite	Citrine
December	Turquoise	Tanzanite	Zircon



With Permission Darryl Powell

Coral

The American Federation of Mineralogical Societies' Commemorative Stamp Committee
 The Commemorative Stamp Committee is trying to convince the United States Postal Service to produce stamps featuring birthstones. No stamps featuring gems have ever appeared on US stamps although there have been some beautiful ones from other countries. Both AFMS members and the public should send requests to the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee of the USPS. It is very difficult to succeed in getting a commemorative stamp. Only one in 50,000 requests succeeds.



Wont you please help by sending your letter? We are promoting the birthstones shown in the box above. A Stamp Promotion Flier is available and tells you how and where to send your letter supporting this AFMS effort. Thanks!

