

Peridot, birthstone for the month of August

Called the 'evening emerald' because it was said to glow at night. The name is derived from the Greek peridona meaning 'giving plenty'.

General Information

Peridot is the birthstone for August and the anniversary gemstone for the 16th year of marriage. It is the best-known volcanic gem variety of the mineral olivine. The finest stones are eye clean and have a deep lime green colour, one of the few gemstones which exist in only one colour.

The deep green colour is due to traces of iron. Because inclusions are common, clarity is an extremely important factor when buying peridot. Small crystals have been found in volcanic rock and gem samples have also been discovered in meteorites that have fallen to earth.



Legend and Lore

Peridot is an ancient gemstone, and it was believed to have the power to ward off evil spirits, nightmares, and enchantments. It was also used as a remedy to treat asthma and other ailments. Its power was considered most potent when it was set in gold. Hawaiian legend called peridot the divine tears wept by Pele, goddess of the volcano.

History

Peridot can trace its jewellery origins back as far as 3,500 years. It was first mined by the ancient Egyptians on the island of Zebargad in the Red Sea. Zebargard, was known as the Serpent Isle because it was infested with snakes that interfered with mining activity until one Pharaoh had them all driven into the sea. The gem was also used to decorate medieval churches and was most likely carried back to Europe by the Crusaders.

Location

The United States was for many years the largest producer of peridot. It is also mined in Brazil, China, Egypt, Germany, Hawaii, Italy, Norway, Burma, and Sri-Lanka. A new deposit was discovered in Pakistan in 1994, yielding peridot of outstanding quality. These stones are called Kashmir-Peridot.

Physical Properties

Mineral Special:	Gem variety of the mineral olivine
Crystal Structure:	Orthorhombic crystal system
Specific Gravity:	3.34
Hardness:	Hardness 6½
Refractive Index:	(DR) 1.654 – 1.710



Durability

Peridot is relatively soft being 6½ on Mohs scale of hardness therefore it is not advisable for everyday wear in a ring. It is also highly sensitive to rapid temperature changes. Peridot should never be cleaned ultrasonically.



Enhancements

Peridot is not usually enhanced or heat-treated but it is occasionally treated with colourless oils, wax, and natural or synthetic resins to fill in voids or surface fractures and to improve appearance or lustre.

Synthetics and Simulants

Synthetic peridot is not produced. Peridot-coloured synthetic sapphire and convincing imitations are made in glass and garnet topped doublets.

