

Garnets

by MGS Junior Member Brooke



Introduction:

If you were born in the cold, wintery days of January, then your birthstone is a garnet. Some believe that the garnet symbolizes trustfulness and eternal friendship. The garnet has a long and fascinating history. In this article, I will give a brief introduction of the birthstone as well as provide some interesting facts.

Information about Garnets:

"Garnet" comes from the Latin word *granatum* meaning pomegranate because of its common deep red color and its seed-like form of this fruit. However, not all garnets are red. They can be many different shades of red, black, green, and even colorless. The only color that has not been found with a garnet is blue. The different colors come from various types of metals found in the gemstones. Examples commonly found are manganese, iron, calcium & aluminum.

Garnets can be classified in six groups: grossular, which are red and orange, almandine, which are only red, pyrope, which are red and pink, spessartite, which are green-brown, andradite, which are brown to black, and uvarovite, which are emerald green. Green garnets are more valuable, making them the most sought-after, but green is a hard-to-find color, making it very rare.

Sometimes they also have mineral fibers that cause the garnet to have an illusion of a four or six rayed star within the birthstone.

Garnets are easily identified using strong neodymium magnets because of their source of iron/manganese. They can sometimes be found in volcanic rocks. On the Mohs scale (scale that characterizes the scratch resistance of various minerals); a garnet is 6.5 to 7.5.

The birthstone is not fluorescent and is the most popular choice as January's birthstone. However, another listed option for January is the common Rose Quartz. Many legends credit the garnet with keeping bad dreams away.

History of Garnets:

Throughout time, many civilizations valued the garnet, including Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Incas, Aztecs, Persians, Tibetans, and Indians. People have been making jewelry out of the gemstone since 3100 B.C. Native Americans believed the garnet could keep bad spirits, such as demons, away, so many wove the birthstones into dream catchers. They also thought garnets could prevent poisoning/wounds and brought victory in battle, so they put them on their shields.

Where Garnets Are Found Around the World:

Garnets can be found all over the world, with India being where most are discovered. Other locations include Africa, Australia, North America, and South America. Orange and red garnets have been discovered in the Kunene River, on the border between Namibia and Angola. In Australia, garnets have been found in Harts Range, Northern Territory. Several colors of garnets have been found in Sri Lanka. They have also have been found in Kentucky, Arkansas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah in the United States. Garnets were once even found in a New York City sewer on West Thirty-Fifth Street in August 1885!

Conclusion:

With their various colors and long history, I believe garnets are one of the most interesting birthstones around.

Sources:

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