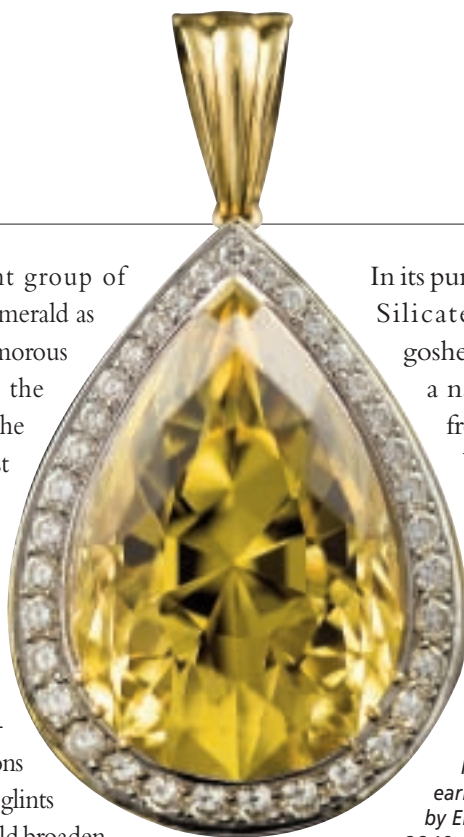


THE SUNSHINE STONE

An appealing yellow color and scarcity make yellow beryl an enigmatic and collectible gem.

BY DIANA JARRETT

Beryl, an important ancient group of colored gemstones, counts emerald as the most celebrated of its glamorous species. Aquamarine and the delicate pink Morganite are also beryl. The elusive red bixbite might be the priciest beryl, due to its extremely rare occurrence in any size whatsoever. But early in the twentieth century, German miners looking for aquamarine in a pegmatite vein in Namibia chanced upon a hefty pocket of a wildly saturated golden-toned beryl. And the previously unknown yellow beryl was discovered. Later, other regions yielded yellow beryl with warm orangish glints or a slightly greenish back color that would broaden the range of this new gemstone variety.



In its purest form, beryl, an Aluminum Beryllium Silicate $Al_2Be_3(Si_6O_{18})$, is the colorless goshenite. Minute traces of iron, coupled with a naturally occurring nimbus emanating from microscopic uranium, gives colorless beryl various degrees of yellow. Golden beryl encompasses a spectrum of yellow hues, from a delicate lemon tint to a vibrant golden shade.

***This page:** 72-carat pear-shaped heliodor pendant in a Tajikistan cut by Joseph Garcia set in 18-karat gold with diamond accents. Courtesy Ruben's Custom Design. **Opposite page, top:** Cage earrings of yellow beryl, diamonds and 18-karat gold by Erica Courtney Inc., Drop Dead Gorgeous™; **center:** 26.19-carat golden beryl, Four Directions Oval™ by Larry Woods, Jewels from the Woods.*

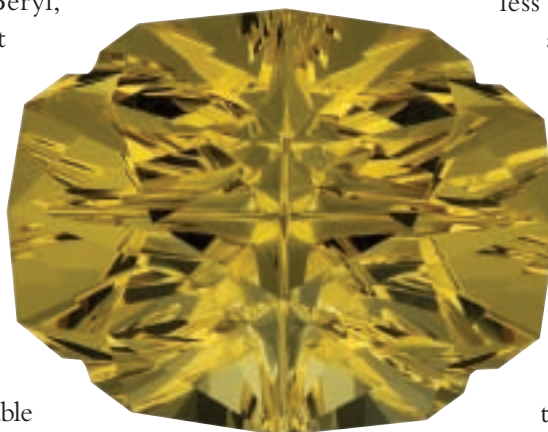
In marketing, all yellow beryl is often mistakenly branded as golden beryl. To separate these gems, the stones with a fresh slightly greenish yellow are called heliodor, while pure yellow to yellow-orange specimens are properly referred to as golden beryl. True heliodor has a loyal following among collectors, but not so much for jewelry; golden beryl is more frequently placed in colorful jewelry designs.

While emerald normally shows abundant natural inclusions, yellow beryl is relatively free of any visible imperfections. The fact that yellow beryl occurs in large rough broadens its potential. The largest faceted heliodor known to exist is 2,054 carats and is on display at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

CUTTING ATTRIBUTES

The availability of large, clean rough is a designer's dream. Award-winning gem carver Larry Woods chose a particularly attractive golden beryl crystal to showcase his skill at the American Gem Trade Association's (AGTA) 2006 Cutting Edge Awards competition. Woods'

26.19-carat Tajikistan Golden Beryl, Four Directions Oval™ earned first place in the Combination Cuts category. This hard material does not present any particular challenges for cutting, notes Woods. "Other than orientation for best color and shape," he says, "it doesn't have any other mineralogical features, such as cleavage plane, to worry about. The rough is generally available in well-formed crystals, and other than some needles and silk in some pieces, it's generally very clean." Still, with all its attributes, the yellow beryl Woods selects must meet his short list to make the grade. "The main things I look for when buying golden beryl rough," says Woods, "is first the depth and intensity of color, and then size, shape and clarity of the material."



WHO'S BUYING?

Yellow sapphire lovers or canary diamond aficionados may be the ideal collector of golden beryl; several of the stone's shades mimic a yellow sapphire or diamond. Side by side, yellow beryl will not be mistaken for citrine, which is a softer quartz stone. Citrine is less brilliant and cannot take as high a polish as golden beryl. Susan Schragin of Brazilliant Gems offers the rainbow of gems that come from Brazil, including yellow beryl. In her experience, this gem is underexploited in the marketplace primarily because many retailers aren't up to speed about this variety. "It is really up to the sales associates in the stores to convey the knowledge, which they rarely know anything about."

On the flip side, the exotic appeal created by its relative under-use as a gem choice has distinct advantages. Its rarity can create interest, and so "Just this past year," Schragin recalls, "I sold one to a store for an engagement ring for a young man. It was his second marriage."

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The Sunshine Stone

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Erica Courtney, whose celebrity clients include Hollywood A-listers, pairs appealing gemstone combinations with opulent designs for lavish lifestyles. Jessica Alba turned heads at the 2006 Oscars when she arrived wearing Courtney's Have a Drop Dead Gorgeous Day™ golden beryl earrings. Asked about her choice of using yellow beryl in her line, Courtney says, "I love working with yellow beryl because it gives the rich look of a canary diamond and has such a warm golden glow."

GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS

Since geological conditions play a role in the appearance of same species stones, it stands to reason that golden beryl differs somewhat from region to region. Dealers feel that intensely deep yellow beryl hails from South East Africa or Madagascar. The most sought after banana-peel yellow color may come from there, but it is still rare.

Tom Cushman of Allerton Cushman & Company gets yellow beryl from Madagascar. His customers want the cooler yellow beryl, although, he says, "there was a time when harvest tones were called for the most." Still, Cushman says, his yellow beryl are priced all the same, no matter what color they want. According to Cushman, yellow beryl is produced less than other colors of beryl in Madagascar. And while some of the material available today is irradiated, Cushman says that his Madagascar supply is all natural.



By volume, perhaps the largest output of cool lemony yellow gem beryl today is from Brazil; Namibia produces the material as well. According to gem carver Woods, "Primarily, the golden beryl that we have been working with is reported to have come from Tajikistan, although there does not appear to be any new material from this location. My source has reported that the mine there is closed. We also get some material from Brazil but only an occasional piece." Today yellow beryl shares a unique position as an enigma to the general public. Dealers, including Brazilliant's Schragin find, "there's not that much of it around." This scarcity has not forced a price hike, often wholesaling to just over \$60 per carat, making it a smart choice for collectors who want something essentially valuable, irrespective of its price.

It's a durable stone, in a prized species, clean and sizable. Schragin points out that discerning collectors acquire "the most desirable colors — the ones that imitate the fancy yellow diamond or yellow sapphire." ♦

This page, top: BeBe earrings of yellow beryl, diamonds and 18-karat gold; **bottom:** Snake ring of yellow beryl, diamonds, sapphires and 18-karat gold. Both by Erica Courtney Inc., Drop Dead Gorgeous™.