

# GRITTY GREETINGS



## Waco Gem and Mineral Club

.Volume 62, Issue 6, June, 2021

P.O. Box 8811, Waco, TX 76714-8811

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Welcome to new members signed up at the show!!!!

- Deanna Ford, with Bradley, Macie, Madison, Micah
- Dorothy Marstaller
- Janice Todd
- Ted and Grace Miller

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## Contacts

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### June birthstones: Pearl, Alexandrite, and Moonstone.

**Pearls** are the only gemstones made by living creatures. Mollusks produce pearls by depositing layers of calcium carbonate around microscopic irritants—usually a grain of sand, as it’s commonly believed—that get lodged in their shells.

While any shelled mollusk can technically make a pearl, only two groups of bivalve mollusks (or clams) use mother-of-pearl to create the iridescent “nacreous” pearls that are valued in jewelry. These rare gemstones don’t require any polishing to reveal their natural luster.

Appropriately, the name “pearl” comes from the Old French *perle*, from the Latin *perna* meaning “leg,” referencing the leg-of-mutton shape of an open mollusk shell. Because perfectly round, smooth, natural pearls are so uncommon, the word “pearl” can refer to anything rare and valuable.

The rarest and most expensive pearls are natural pearls made in the wild without human interference. The majority of pearls sold today are cultured or farmed by implanting a grafted piece of shell (and sometimes a round bead) into pearl oysters or freshwater pearl mussels.

Pearls are very soft, ranging between 2.5 and 4.5 on the Mohs scale. They are sensitive to extreme heat and acidity. In fact, calcium carbonate is so susceptible to acid that authentic pearls will dissolve in vinegar.

The finest pearls have a naturally reflective luster, making them appear creamy white with an iridescent sheen that casts many colorful hues. Cultured freshwater pearls can also be dyed yellow, green, blue, brown, pink, purple or black.

Black pearls—which are mostly cultured because they are so rare in nature—aren’t actually black but rather green, purple, blue or silver.

Pearls used to be found in many parts of the world, but natural pearling is now confined to the Persian Gulf waters near Bahrain. Australia owns one of the world’s last remaining pearl diving fleets and still harvests natural pearls from the Indian Ocean.

Today, most freshwater cultured pearls come from China. South Sea pearls are cultured along the northwestern coastline of Australia, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

A relatively modern gemstone, **alexandrite** was discovered in Russian emerald mines located in the Ural Mountains. Legends claim that it was discovered in 1834 on the same day that future Russian Czar Alexander II came of age; it was named to honor him.

Often described as “emerald by day, ruby by night,” alexandrite is a rare variety of the mineral chrysoberyl that changes color from bluish green in daylight to purplish red under incandescent light.

This chameleon-like color shift is the result of its uncommon chemical composition which includes traces of chromium, the same coloring agent found in emerald. The unlikelihood of these elements combining under the right conditions makes alexandrite one of the rarest and most expensive gemstones on Earth.

The alexandrite mined from Russia’s famed deposits set the quality standard for this gemstone. Today, most alexandrite comes from Sri Lanka, Brazil, and East Africa, generally paling in comparison to the vivid colors of Russian gemstones. With a hardness of 8.5 on the Mohs scale, alexandrite is softer than sapphire and harder than garnet—the other gemstones that can change color. However, due to its scarcity, alexandrite is more valuable than most gemstones, including rubies and diamonds.

June’s third birthstone, **moonstone**, was named by the Roman natural historian Pliny, who wrote that moonstone’s shimmery appearance shifted with the phases of the moon.

The most common moonstone comes from the mineral adularia, named for an early mining site near Mt. Adular in Switzerland that supplied this gemstone. This site also birthed the term *adularescence*, which refers to the stone’s milky glow, like moonlight floating on water.

Moonstone is composed of microscopic layers of feldspar that scatter light to cause this billowy effect of adularescence. Thinner layers produce a bluish sheen, and thicker layers look white. Moonstone gems come in a range of colors spanning yellow, gray, green, blue, peach, and pink, sometimes displaying a star or cat’s eye.

The finest classical moonstones, colorlessly transparent with a blue shimmer, come from Sri Lanka. Since these sources of high-quality blue moonstones have essentially been mined out, prices have risen sharply.

Moonstones are also found in India, Australia, Myanmar, Madagascar, and the United States. Indian gemstones, which are brown, green, or orange in color, are more abundant and affordably priced than their classical blue counterparts.

This beautiful gemstone’s weakness is its relatively low hardness of 6 on the Mohs scale, making it prone to stress cracking and cleaving. Care is required with moonstone jewelry like rings or bracelets; so, sometimes brooches and pendants are preferred for long term durability.



Courtesy American Gem Society - See more at: <http://www.americangemsociety.org/>

**The June meeting will be held at the clubhouse at 10 AM on Saturday June 5. The planned program will be Bob Boyd’s presentation on topaz hunting in Texas.**

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# Brad's Bench Tips

## SEPARATING DISCS

Separating Discs (also called Cutoff Wheels) are inexpensive and do a great job cutting or shaping steel. You can use them to sharpen tool points, cut piano wire to length, make slots, and sharpen worn drills. Other uses include modifying pliers and making your own design stamps.

My preference is the one inch diameter size. Be sure to hold the wheel firmly so nothing moves to break the disc, and definitely wear your safety glasses. Those are little flakes of steel coming off the disk.

BTW - Separating Discs are rather poor at soft metals like copper, silver and gold. Soft metals clog up the cutting edges.



## DEBURRING JUMP RINGS

When cutting jump rings from large gauge wire for chain making, you'll notice the saw leaves a small burr. An easy way to remove these is to tumble the rings with some fine-cut pyramids. It's best not to tumble for a long period with the pyramids because it will remove the polished finish from the wire.

No tumbler, no problem. You don't actually need a tumbler. I just put a handful of pyramids in a wide mouth plastic jar and shake for a bit. You can find these pyramids in the tumble finishing section of most jewelry supply catalogs.



2021 Waco Gem and Mineral Show at Richland Mall

May 1- 2, 2021



James, Jackie, Nikki - at the front desk.

James was the “Voice” of the PA system. His main function was to announce the beginning and ending of each Silent Auction. He spent the rest of his time walking around looking important. Jackie was in charge of the revenue. Nikki helped sign up people and hand out tickets for the door prize drawings.



Sunni, Jim, Alison

Note: Jim and Karl were active with the Breaker Patrol. Some vendors had lights that consumed quite a bit of amperage. Jim and Karl were on-call to re-set breakers that tripped. Sunni P and Alison R are the SP and AR of the SPAR Gem and Mineral Co.

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This is Shawn, the “Shipping Department” for SPAR.



Jane was also manning the “Shipping Department” for the SPAR Company.



Roy and Nelda



Charlotte and Scott



Stephanie



John Langston



Pam and Karl and the Silent Auction



I really do not think the vendor selling these slabs has ever been to Australia. Mookaite (correct spelling) comes from only one place in the entire world and that is the Mooka River bed in Australia. From what I am learning, people will buy raw stones by the pound, by the bucket, by the pickup load, then saw them up to make slabs. Then they evaluate the beauty of the surfaces. These slabs are sold to other gem and mineral people who see “the perfect cabochons” that can be made with one of these slabs.

By Harry Senn

## Notes

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The editor requests news items from any member to be included in the Gritty Greetings.

Deadline for submissions is the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the month.

### **Name Tags:**

It is great that we feed the pig at our meetings because we don't have or have lost or forgotten our nametags to drop a quartering the pig. The money from the pig goes toward our Scholarship program, and we really do appreciate every 2 bits, 4 bits, 6 bits or more. However, if you need a nametag you can purchase them at the businesses below!

Waco Gem & Mineral Club nametags are available at **Print Mart**, 202 Deb (behind AutoNation Chevrolet). Cost with a pin back is \$8.00 (with tax \$8.66), and with a magnet back is \$11.00 (\$11.91). or at Award Specialties at 431 Lake Air Dr.

### **Club Dues:**

Annual Waco Gem and Mineral Club dues are \$12.00 for an individual membership or \$20.00 for a family membership. Please check with Jackie if you aren't sure whether you've paid your Dues!

### **Shop Fees:**

Lapidary Workshop fee is \$2.00 per hour. Slab Saw fee is an additional \$2.00 per hour. Class fees are always dependent upon class and instructor.

The Waco Gem and Mineral Club is a member of the South-Central Federation of Mineral Societies; and the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. Meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month (except July and September) at 10:00 a.m. at the Waco Gem and Mineral Club Clubhouse, 187 South McLennan Drive in Elm Mott, Texas. The lapidary workshop is in the clubhouse.

Our website is [www.wacogemandmineral.org](http://www.wacogemandmineral.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WacoGemAndMineralClub>

### **Club Purpose**

- to bring about a close association of those persons interested in earth science and lapidary arts
- to increase and disseminate knowledge about rocks, minerals, fossils, Indian artifacts and other geological materials
- to encourage lapidary art and the collection and exhibition of rocks, minerals, fossils and artifacts
- to conduct field trips, meetings, lectures, displays and an annual show for the edification of the public
- to cooperate with educational and scientific institutions and other groups in increasing knowledge and popular interest.

