

Peridot

The Egyptians called peridot the “gem of the sun.”

Peridot has always been associated with light. Some believed that it protected its owner from “terrors of the night,” especially when it was set in gold. Others strung the gems on donkey hair and tied them around their left arms to ward off evil spirits. The word peridot comes from the Arabic “faridat,” which means “gem.” Most peridot formed deep inside the earth and was delivered to the surface by volcanoes. Some also came to Earth in meteorites, but this extraterrestrial peridot is extremely rare, and not likely to be seen in a retail jewelry store.

Color

Peridot’s color ranges from yellowish green to greenish yellow. The most favored peridot color is a richly saturated pure grass green without any hint of yellow or brown, which is usually only achieved in gems of 10 ct or larger. Smaller examples tend to show yellowish green hues. Brown undertones lower the value of peridot.



Peridot, one of the oldest known gemstones, was thought by the ancients to dissolve enchantments, especially if it was set in gold.

The color range for peridot is narrow, from a brown-green color to yellowish green to pure green. Yellowish green is the most common peridot color seen in jewelry.



Clarity

The best-quality peridot has no eye-visible inclusions, with perhaps a few tiny black spots—minute mineral crystals—visible under magnification. Other inclusions common in peridot are reflective, disk-shaped inclusions called “lily pads.”

Sources

Peridot is found as irregular nodules (rounded rocks with peridot crystals inside) in some lava flows in the United States, China and Vietnam and, very rarely, as large crystals lining veins or pockets in certain types of solidified molten rock. Sources for the latter include Finland, Pakistan, Myanmar and the island of Zabargad.

Treatments

Peridot is rarely treated, but might have fractures that can be filled to improve the apparent clarity.

Major Sources

China, Egypt, Finland, Myanmar, Pakistan, Tanzania, United States, Vietnam

Mineral

Olivine

Mohs Hardness

6.5 to 7

Toughness

Fair to Good

Color

Yellowish green

Birthstone

August

Care and Cleaning

Warm, soapy water is the best method for cleaning peridot. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are not recommended.

Images courtesy: Bill Larson, Pala International; Jonte BerLion; Stephen M. Avery