

# GRITTY GREETINGS



## Waco Gem and Mineral Club

Volume 61, Issue 12, December, 2020

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

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The Board of Directors of the Waco Gem and Mineral Club has decided to err on the side of caution and cancel the Christmas banquet. Also, President and Vice President will be out of town in January, so we will not have a January meeting. Hopefully we will be able to hold our February meeting on schedule. Stay safe out there and have a Merry Christmas in spite of 2020’s wrath!

Gritty Greetings: Waco Gem and Mineral Club Newsletter

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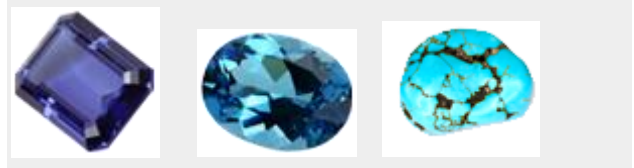
### **61<sup>st</sup> Annual Waco Gem and Mineral Show**

The 61<sup>st</sup> Annual Waco Gem and Mineral Show will be held on May 1 and 2, 2021. Currently, some spaces are available for vendors as there have been some cancellations.

If you have any questions, please contact **2021 Show chair Alison Redding** or email: [wacogemandmineralclub@gmail.com](mailto:wacogemandmineralclub@gmail.com). Visit our website for more information and to download your application. [www.wacogemandmineral.org](http://www.wacogemandmineral.org)

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## December Birthstones *Tanzanite, Zircon, and Turquoise.*



**Tanzanite** is the exquisite blue-purple variety of the mineral zoisite that is only found in one part of the world. Named for its limited geographic origin in Tanzania, tanzanite has quickly risen to popularity since its relatively recent discovery.

Zoisite had been around more than a century and a half before this rare blue variety was found in 1967. Trace amounts of vanadium, mixed with extreme heat, cause the blue-purple color—which ranges from pale blue to intense ultramarine with violet undertones.

Due to pleochroism, tanzanite can display different colors when viewed from different angles. Stones must be cut properly to highlight the more attractive blue and violet hues and deemphasize the undesirable brown tones.

Most of the tanzanite on the market today is heat treated to minimize the brown colors found naturally and to enhance the blue shades that can rival sapphire.

Tanzanite is still only found on a few square miles of land in Tanzania, near majestic Mount Kilimanjaro. Its price and availability are directly tied to mines in this region, most of which are now slowing production significantly.

Tanzanite measures 6.5 to 7 on the Mohs scale of hardness—which is not nearly as hard as the sapphire it often substitutes. Given its vulnerability to scratch during daily wear and abrasion, tanzanite is better suited for earrings and pendants than rings.

Between its deep blue color and its limited supply, tanzanite is treasured by many, even if your birthday is not in December.

**Zircon** is an underrated gemstone that's often confused with synthetic cubic zirconia due to similar names and shared use as diamond simulants. Few people realize that zircon is a spectacular natural gemstone available in a variety of colors.

The name “zircon” likely comes from the Persian word zargun, meaning “gold-colored.” Others trace it to the Arabic zarkun, meaning “vermillion.” Given its wide range of colors—spanning red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and brown—both origins are plausible.

Zircon commonly occurs as brownish red, which can be popular for its earth tones. However, most gem-quality stones are heat treated until colorless, gold or blue (the most popular color). Blue zircon, in particular, is the alternative birthstone for December.

Color differences in zircon are caused by impurities, some of which (like uranium) can be slightly radioactive. These gemstones are also treated with heat to stabilize the radioactivity.

While radiation can break down zircon's crystal structure, it plays a crucial role in radiometric dating. Zircon, the oldest mineral on Earth, contains important clues about the formation of our planet.

Colorless zircon, known as Matura Diamond, displays brilliance and flashes of multicolored “fire” that can rival fine diamond. There's one key difference though: Zircon is more brittle. Though it measures 7.5 on the Mohs scale of hardness, its faceted edges can chip.

Zircon from Australia dates back 4.4 billion years. Australia still leads the world in zircon mining, producing 37 percent of the world's supply. Other sources include Thailand, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Cambodia, Canada, and the United States.

**Turquoise** Admired since ancient times, turquoise is known for its distinct color, which ranges from powdery blue to greenish robin egg blue. It's one of few minerals to lend its name to anything that resembles its striking color.

The word "turquoise" dates back to the 13th century, drawing from the French expression pierre tourques, which referenced the "Turkish stone" brought to Europe from Turkey.

Ancient Persia (now Iran) was the traditional source for sky blue turquoise gemstones. This color is often called "Persian blue" today, regardless of its origin. The Sinai Peninsula in Egypt was also an important historical source of turquoise gems.

The U.S. is now the world's largest turquoise supplier. Nevada, New Mexico, California, and Colorado have produced turquoise, but Arizona leads in production by value, as well as quality. The stone's popularity here makes it a staple in Native American jewelry.

Turquoise is found in arid regions where rainwater dissolves copper in the soil, forming colorful nodular deposits when it combines with aluminum and phosphorus. Copper contributes blue hues, while iron and chrome add a hint of green.

Some turquoise contains pieces of host rock, called matrix, which appear as dark webs or patches in the material. This can lower the stone's value, although the uniform "spiderweb" pattern of Southwestern turquoise is attractive.

Turquoise is sensitive to direct sunlight and solvents like makeup, perfume, and natural oils. The hardest turquoise only measures 6 on the Mohs scale, which made this soft gemstone popular in carved talismans throughout history.

From ancient Egyptians to Persians, Aztecs and Native Americans, kings and warriors alike admired turquoise for thousands of years. It adorned everything from jewelry to ceremonial masks to weapons and bridles.

Highly esteemed for its striking namesake color and its ancient history, turquoise's popularity remains timeless.

- See more at: <http://www.americangemsociety.org/>

### Brad's Bench Tips



**Whenever I have to make more than 2-3 exact copies of a sheet metal component, I think of making a template. Templates let me easily draw the shape of an item to cut out.**

**Art stores or online sources like [cooltools.us/](http://cooltools.us/) and [kingsleynorth.com/](http://kingsleynorth.com/) sell templates for common shapes like circles, ovals, hearts, etc. but for nonstandard shapes, I make my own out of a scrap of sheet plastic or sheet metal. My preference is brass. I carefully lay out the shape using a steel ruler, a set of dividers, a scribe, and a fine center punch.**

**One example is the brass template in the pic below that let's me quickly trace the design of ginko leaf earrings onto silver sheet. Another is the nickel template which makes it easy to drill a pattern of holes for pin inlay into wooden handles.**

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#### **OCHRE APPLICATOR**

**Yellow ochre is used when you want to be sure the solder won't flow on an area of your piece while you're soldering another area. The only problem with ochre is coming up with a good way to store and apply it.**

**I use recycled nail polish bottles. They seal well and have a built-in brush applicator. Just clean them out with a little acetone or nail polish remover, and they're ready to go.**

**Wishing you happy holidays.  
Hopefully 2021 will be a better year.**

**Brad's "How To" Books Make a Nice Holiday Gift**  
**[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)**





## Waco Gem and Mineral Club



### WGM Wins Third Place in SCFMS Website Contest

The <https://www.wacogemandmineral.org/> website won Third Place in the South Central Federation of Mineral Societies (SCFMS) Inc. 2020 Website Contest. According to SCFMS, the "primary purpose of the Web Site Contest is to improve your web site to make it more meaningful to web site visitors and club members." Participants in the contest were given criteria to check for in managing their websites. The contest is hosted by the <http://www.scfms.net/> website.

The **South Central Federation of Mineral Societies**, started in 1943, is "a nonprofit organization comprised of Member Societies from the states of Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas." The SCFMS is one of seven Regional Federations belonging to the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS). The Waco Gem and Mineral Club is one of 37 clubs belonging to the SCFMS. Our membership is a portion of 2000 SCFMS members. The SCFMS promotes interest and education in lapidary arts, minerals, fossils, and associated earth sciences. The SCFMS is a member in good standing with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.



The **American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS)** is a non-profit educational federation of seven regional societies throughout the United States. Founded in 1947, the AFMS is an educational federation. They promote a popular interest in Geology, Mineralogy, Paleontology, Lapidary and other related subjects.

The Waco Gem and Mineral Club website was created by the previous web masters, Sunni and Joel Purl. They laid a solid foundation for an online presence and brought the Club from the mimeograph era to the electronic age. Even after moving from Waco and the Gem and Mineral Club they continued maintaining the website. In January 2020 they turned the site over to the new webmaster, Harry Senn. Harry had joined the Club in December of 2019 and volunteered to maintain the site. At the encouragement from Sunni and Joel, the website was entered into the SCFMS Website Contest.

## Notes

The Dallas Gem and Mineral Show last weekend was a successful event. Pres. Roy and VP Scott and this editor had tables selling our wares. I made some money, but spent more on all kinds of rocks!

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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.

