

## Tsavorite Garnet

### All natural green gemstone from the African Savanna

Imagine prospecting in the rolling hills of East Africa near Tsavo National Park. Lions, leopards and rhinos are just a few of the incredible variety of mammals that live on the savanna. Geologist Campbell Bridges was prospecting in Northern Tanzania in 1967. He was looking for beryl for industrial applications when he first spotted some green stones he identified as garnets. Despite his best efforts, he was unable to export the beautiful gems at that time for political reasons. By this time he was hooked though and was convinced that the same geologic strata would contain the elusive green garnets elsewhere if he explored the seam wherever it surfaced. In 1971, Campbell's perseverance was rewarded with the discovery of another outcropping in Kenya, very close to Tsavo Park. This time he was able to get the necessary permits and began mining in earnest. At the time he lived in a tree house for protection from all the wildlife. A python was even reportedly used as a guard for the mined stones!

Green garnets other than demantoid were unknown in the market at that time, but Henry Platt, president of Tiffany Company was immediately enthusiastic about the new find and its potential. Together with Bridges, they proposed the name tsavorite in honor of the source area in 1973. The name was formally accepted by CIBJO, the international body responsible for such things, and Tiffany began promoting tsavorite and making it known to customers in the United States

and the rest of the world.

Unfortunately Campbell Bridges' life of adventure caught up with him in 2009. He was attacked, not by wild animals, but by a mob of about twenty men armed with spears, machetes, and bow and arrows. While it appears the murder was related to disputes over his mining claims, the assault took place during a time of political upheaval in Kenya and for three years there has been no trial. Finally in August of 2012, eight men were brought to trial in the Mombasa courts. The case is still ongoing.

So why are jewelers so excited about this newcomer to the gem world? Well, color is one obvious reason. Tsavorite comes in a range of greens, and the best of them can be compared to emeralds for a fraction of the price. Tsavorite is also a very brilliant stone due to its high refractive index, so it looks good set with diamonds. In addition tsavorite, like all garnets is still untreated in any way. Garnets are about 7.5 on the Moh's scale in hardness and their crystal structure makes them particularly robust so they are suitable for everyday wear. Tsavorite meets all the criteria for a precious stone, and I think we can expect great things in its future.

What makes a particular garnet be green instead of red? Both the chemical structure, and the presence of trace elements. Tsavorite is green grossularite, which is the calcium rich member of the garnet family. Chemically, this gemstone is a calcium aluminum silicate colored by traces of chromium and/or vanadium oxide. If there is a yellowish hue to the green, this would indicate the presence of iron oxide. The more common red garnets are iron aluminum silicates.



**1.32 carat tsavorite garnet and 0.30 ctw diamonds in 18KT & 14KT gold \$3100**

**Tsavorite garnet and white sapphires in fine silver PMC \$599**

**Tsavorite garnet in 14KT and silver earrings \$799**

**Tsavorite garnet and fossil mammoth tooth in gold and silver pendant. Inset shows reverse \$1799**

