

## Feldspar

A treatise by guest author, Tai Salisbury

As a kid, I spent a considerable amount of time at my folks' auction barn. My favorite chore was scrubbing the sinks. I loved the powder, and how it felt so scratchy but never scratched the sinks. I still have a fondness for the cleaner Bon Ami. We use it constantly in the shop- preparing metal for etching, enameling, patination, washing our hands, and yes, cleaning filthy sinks. Imagine how tickled I was when I found out that the magic ingredient in my Bon Ami is feldspar!!

In the late nineteenth century, the standard for scouring soaps was to mix in powdered quartz with Mohs hardness of 7. Feldspar, which has a Mohs hardness 6-6.5, was often mined from the same mines and discarded as an unwanted by-product. J.T. Robertson, the developer of Bon Ami, realized that he could create a less abrasive, yet still effective soap while decreasing materials cost by using feldspar. According to the company, this formula has never changed.

Feldspar is actually a grouping of minerals that together make up more than 60% of the Earth's crust. All feldspars contain aluminum, oxygen and silicon but other elements can be present in different proportions to create different types of feldspars. Common feldspars used in jewelry include moonstone, labradorite, sunstone, amazonite, and andesine.

Moonstone is commonly set in jewelry, both art and fine and is often used in the carving of cameos. Moonstone does not refer to a

single type of feldspar, but any feldspar that looks like moonstone. A stone that looks similar but is not feldspar is considered imitation moonstone. True moonstone is found in sub-groups orthoclase, albite, and oligoclase. Moonstones can be white, pink, green, yellow, brown, black or

multicolored. Rainbow moonstone is probably the easiest type to recognize with its white background and blue or blue and yellow surface sheen. Rainbow moonstone is actually a type of labradorite!

Labradorite was originally discovered on the Labrador Peninsula in Canada, but can be found all over the world. It is best known for its optical play of surface color which can include blue, green, yellow, orange, purple and red. This effect is called labradorescence. The body color of labradorite is usually a brown or grey that is often transparent when held up to light. A striking variant known as spectrolite is found in Finland. Spectrolite has the most intense range of colors, and it is commonly considered the most desirable variety of labradorite. In addition to being utilized in jewelry, labradorite is also a favorite material of decorative stone carvers.

Prior to 1980, sunstone typically referred to any orange-ish feldspar that had a sheen or glittery effect. However, in 1980, a new type of sunstone was discovered in central Oregon. Oregon sunstone is another type of labradorite and owes its particular shimmer effect or schiller to the presence of copper within the stone. It can be orange, brown, red, green, yellow, pink, multi-colored or colorless. Other major sources of sunstone include India, Tanzania, Norway and Ontario, Canada.

Amazonite is another feldspar that shows up in jewelry, often in bead form. It is a bluish-green opaque stone that often has streaks of white in it and a sheen similar to sunstone. Because of its color, it is often used to mimic turquoise. Originally, it was found in Russia, but in later years the Pike's Peak region of Colorado was discovered to have excellent quality amazonite.

Feldspars display a stunning variety of special effects and surprises, and continuously delight the eye. Due to their relative softness, feldspars are best suited for pendants, earrings and brooches, or rings with protective settings.

**Labradorite in 18KT yellow gold and oxidised Argentium silver \$1800**

**3.33ct sunstone and black diamonds in rose gold \$2200**

**Feldspar stackable rings in 18KT yellow gold \$1600**

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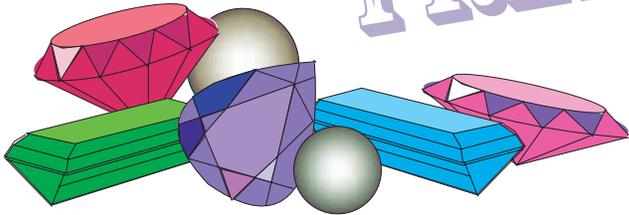
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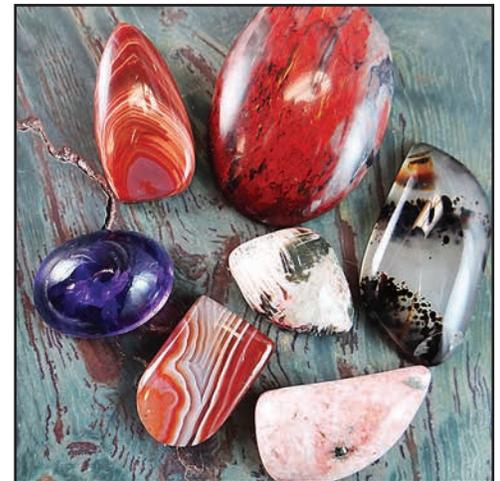
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