

Amber



History:

Amber is formed from the fossilised tree resin of now extinct conifer and ancient pine trees and must be several million years old to be called amber. Treasured and used for centuries in jewellery, amber has been used for decoration since the stone age and is perhaps the oldest substance ever used for human adornment.

Throughout history amber has been found in deposits all over the world and varies in colour depending on the area in which it was found and its age. Today the finest amber is found on the Baltic coast of Germany, other deposits can be found off the coasts of Sicily, Poland, England and in Burma.

Characteristics:

Amber has been sort after by collectors for many years; steadily growing in popularity it is now readily available on the high street. Each piece of amber is unique with no two pieces appearing the same. It can be produced in a variety of sizes and shapes and is available in a range of colours, the most popular being the traditional fiery bronze cognac amber. Green amber has recently become more popular and is created when moss and plant material are captured inside it creating a variegated mottled effect. Other colours include yellow, white and even black.

Occasionally faceted, amber is more widely seen as a cabochon creating a soft smooth finish which allows the natural inclusions of plant life and insects captured inside to be seen easily. These inclusions are highly desirable and have been a source of fascination and wonder for many years.

As amber is relatively inexpensive and light weight it is often used as large stones set into eye catching pendants and necklets. Most commonly mounted into silver jewellery the soft warm colour of amber also lends itself to gold settings.

The Mohs' scale measures a gems relative hardness on a scale of 1 to 10 based on the stones "scratchability". Diamond is the hardest at 10, sapphire and rubies measure 9, with pearl at around 3 ½. At 2 ½, amber is not as hard as some gemstones.

Care and Cleaning:

To keep your amber jewellery looking its best contact with solutions such as hair spray and perfumes should be avoided. It is also advisable to remove amber jewellery when using household soaps, detergents, cooking oils and butters. All of these substances can leave amber with a dull white coating that can become permanent.

Avoid exposing your jewellery to sudden changes in temperature and remove it when doing physical activities. Amber jewellery should be stored in a soft cloth where it cannot rub against metal or other jewellery which may cause the stone to chip. Amber should not be cleaned in ultra sonic or steam cleaners found in jewellery stores as the heat will damage the stone. Any dust or perspiration can be removed using lukewarm water and a soft cloth to restore its lustre.

Legend and Lore:

It has been said that amber's variation in colour reflects the four seasons and the wearer's mood. Many healing and magical powers have been associated with amber; the ancient Greeks believed that it could be worn as protection against disease and it has been used to treat asthma, rheumatism and internal problems throughout the ages.

Amber brings good luck and has long been associated with healing energy and mental stimulation and is said to balance aggressive traits.

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