



*Birth stone:* June

*Anniversary stone:* 5th & 30th year of marriage

### *Introduction:*

Creating romantic visions of wealth and high society pearls have been popular for many years; their elegance and beauty make them ideal to be used in wide variety of jewellery from bridal and evening wear to everyday pieces. Surrounded by many myths and legends these lustrous gems are now readily available to all.

It can take many years to create a pearl suitable for making into a beautiful piece of jewellery. Cocooned inside the protective mollusc shell, a pearl is made as the mollusc covers an irritant with hundreds of layers of an iridescent substance called "nacre". The result is the formation of a unique and individual gem.

There are many different types of pearls which are named depending on how they are created. Natural pearls, the most expensive and sort after of all, are extremely rare with very few found of a suitable size to be used in jewellery making. As their name suggests natural pearls are naturally occurring, created by chance these rare gems can be found in the Persian Gulf and off the coasts of India and Sri Lanka

Cultured pearls and freshwater cultured pearls are more readily available and are created by inserting a small bead inside the mollusc shell around which the pearl is formed. A fast and effective process, this helps make these stunning pearls more affordable with freshwater cultured pearls offering the best value for money.

Found in a variety of places around the world the best quality cultured pearls are found in the Asian waters of Tahiti, Japan and China, whilst freshwater cultured pearls are found in the more temperate areas of the northern hemisphere.

### *History:*

Pearls have been held in high esteem for many years, their apparent rarity caused them to be seen as important financial assets with thousands of oysters being searched to find just one pearl. These illustrious gems were once so valuable that they were comparable to the cost of a house! Today pearls have become more affordable and ever more popular with many different types now readily available.



## *Characteristics:*

The art of culturing pearls has made them more abundant and affordable and what was previously a luxury item reserved for high society has now become an affordable extravagance for all.

As pearls are created by a living organism each pearl is unique with no two appearing the same. Available in a large variety of sizes and shapes pearls range in colour from the classical white/cream to iridescent shades of pinks and greens, blue and even black.

The versatility of pearls has made them increasingly popular, set in white gold, yellow gold or silver jewellery pearls are said to symbolise innocence and purity making them a popular choice for brides to wear on their wedding day.

## *Care and Cleaning:*

To ensure that your pearl jewellery maintains its beautiful lustre it is important to care for it correctly. As pearls are sensitive to acids, dryness and humidity, perfumes and hairspray should be applied and allowed to dry before wearing your jewellery to prevent any discolouration or damage occurring.

Pearls can be cleaned using luke warm water or a mild soap and water solution, being careful to ensure that water does not enter the drill hole as this may discolour the pearl. The jewellery should then be wrapped in an absorbent towel to dry. Do not use harsh detergents or cleaning solutions that contain ammonia as these will damage the pearl, as will the use of ultrasonic cleaners found in jewellery stores.

Pearls should not be stored with other jewellery as they can be easily scratched, they should be wrapped in a soft cloth or placed in a jewellery pouch. Do not store pearls in an airtight plastic bag as pearls need moisture, if they become too dry they may crack.

## *Legend and Lore:*

There are many legends associated with this beautiful gem; the Romans, for example, wore them as a status symbol even wearing them to bed so that they were instantly reminded of their wealth as soon as they woke. The Hindu religion on the other hand uses the presentation of a pearl as part of their marriage ceremony.

Known as Aphrodite's tears of joy and dew drops filled with moonlight, pearls were prized in the dark ages as magical gems that would protect the wearer from harm and are continued to be used in Chinese medicine and cosmetics to this day.