

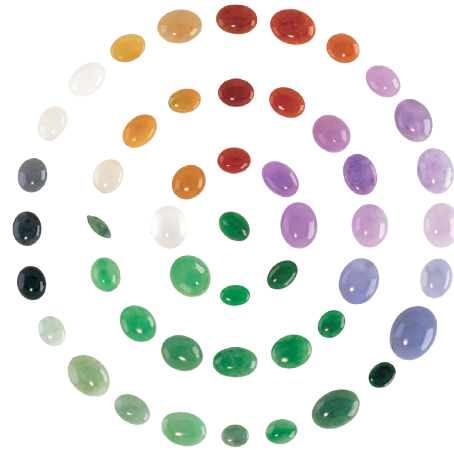
Jadeite Jade

Jadeite is a possession of great luxury in China, where it is believed that a secret virtue of the gem is passed on to its wearer.

The Spanish learned of jadeite jade from the Aztecs of South America, who prized it for its hardness and toughness. Jadeite was discovered in Burma sometime in the 18th century and it quickly became prized by Chinese emperors. They called this new material “Fei Cui,” which referred to the bright green plumage of the kingfisher bird. Often similar in appearance, for a long time no one knew that jadeite jade and nephrite jade were actually two different minerals. In 1863, a French mineralogist named Damour determined that the stones called “Fei Cui” were actually a new mineral, which he named jadeite.

Color

Jadeite is a member of a group of related minerals called pyroxenes. Jadeite occurs in a number of colors including green, lavender, white, orange, brown and yellow. By far the most valuable color is a vivid emerald green, which is often referred to as “imperial jadeite.” Lavender is the second most valuable jadeite color.



Jadeite comes in almost every color; the most desirable colors are green and lavender.



Carved lavender and green jadeite bangle.

Transparency

The second most important value factor of jadeite is transparency. Semi-transparent jadeite is very rare. A piece that combines semi-transparency with fine green color is exceptionally rare and valuable. Semi-transparent colorless jadeite is also very highly prized.

Sources

Jadeite sources include Guatemala, California (U.S.) and the “jade land” of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). The finest quality jadeite comes from Myanmar.

Treatments

Treatment of jadeite includes bleaching to remove unwanted brown color followed by polymer impregnation. Artificial dyes and surface waxing can enhance color and luster of lower grade jadeite. Heat treatments are sometimes used to produce orange and reddish colors of jadeite. Jadeite treated in this fashion is called “B” jade.



Major Sources

Guatemala, Myanmar, United States

Mineral

Jadeite - a pyroxene

Mohs Hardness

6.5 to 7

Toughness

Exceptional

Color

Green, white, orange, yellow, lavender, black, brown

Care and Cleaning

Ultrasonic cleaners and steam cleaners are safe for untreated jade. But jade might be treated by dyeing, bleaching and impregnation, coatings or heat treatment, so warm, soapy water is always a safe choice.

Images courtesy: Crown Jewellery Manufacturers, Ltd. Hong Kong; Mason Kay Fine Jade Jewelry Inc.