

General Information

The name garnet comes from the old English term 'gernet' that means dark red. They are found in many places across the world. They are commonly red, green or blue but can be almost any colour, due to different elements being present. They commonly form a regular shape - dodecahedron crystals.

How is it formed?

As you go deeper and deeper inside the Earth, the temperature rises. At several kilometres depth they are very high. These conditions lead to the formation of metamorphic rocks and garnets within them. Knowing the pressures and temperatures needed to form certain minerals allows geologists to work out a rock's history.

How rare is it?

Some are common, e.g red or green garnets, however, others, e.g. blue garnets containing the metal Vanadium, are very rare.

What are its uses?

Garnets are used as gemstones for jewellery as they can be cut and polished very easily. They were common in the late Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods, as they were thought to be remedies for feverish illness. The 'garnet cloisonné' style is where garnets are set in gold.

They can also be used as abrasives to shape or finish something by rubbing, in the same way as sandpaper.

How it is manufactured?

Garnets can be directly extracted from rock. Garnets are often the hardest mineral in a rock. As the rock is eroded the soft materials are removed first. The remaining hard garnets collect together in 'placer' deposits such as beaches.

How would the Anglo-Saxons have extracted them?

Currently difficult to know. Initial analysis of Hoard garnets suggest they may have come from Asia, an impressive trading distance in those times, before being cut, polished and inlayed within the intricate gold work found on exclusive military sword pommels, etc. This is surprising as they are normally found as jewellery components.

Interesting Facts

Some garnets change colour in different light conditions (blue-green in daylight and red in fluorescent light) because they contain mixtures of rare elements. Some sell up to £3,000 per carat (thumbnail size). They are January birthstones.

Garnet

Silica Mineral



Garnet 'placer' deposits



Staffordshire Hoard Garnet Jewellery



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Modern Garnet Jewellery

