



MSG JEWELLERS

Gem Talk

by Michael S. George

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Chrome Diopside

I'd like to talk to you today about a gemstone you may have never heard of, but once you have seen it, you will want to treasure it and want to see it again and again. That gemstone is Chrome Diopside. Until recently, it was a gemstone that only collectors had heard of and rarely was it seen due to its' scarcity. Chrome Diopside is a gemstone that typically originates from Russia, Finland, and many times in North America – mainly Canada – and sometimes in Kenya. But as the years have gone on and the stone has become more aloof than prevalent, we have found that Russia has become the primary source for the finer quality Chrome Diopsides. It is a gemstone that can be found in India and usually gives a four star appearance when cut into a cabochon shape (a smooth, non-faceted top). It's been given its' name from the Greek word "Diopsis" meaning, "to have a double appearance." What this means is that it's like some gemstones that from one angle give one color and from another angle can give off another color. Chrome Diopside is a gemstone that can rival a fine quality Tsavorite and even a fine quality Columbian Emerald in beauty and intensity of shade. Though it is rare, especially in larger sizes, it is typically rather inexpensive in comparison to Tsavorite or Emeralds due to its' lack of hardness. On the Mohs Scale of 5-6, similar to that of Opal, we find that Chrome Diopside is a gemstone that is typically suited for pendant and earring wear, but as Opal is put into rings and other jewelry items, Chrome Diopside can have the same occurrence in jewelry, but it needs a little tender loving care.

There are as many as twenty known regions that Chrome Diopside has been found including Madagascar, Austria, and Italy. However, it's rarer to find them in these regions. Chrome Diopside became increasingly more difficult to find in the late 1980's and in the early 1990's, due to the Russian strike in 1987. As a result of its borderline jewelry status, you see, until a mine or an

output of gemstones reaches 15,000 to 20,000 carats of faceted cut stones per year, it is generally considered only an investors stone and not given jewelry grade or jewelry status. You will generally find Chrome Diopside to be cut in 50% oval cabochon stones (smooth, non-faceted tops) and 50% faceted and calibrated – meaning that they are 8 x 6 mm or 10 x 8 mm, etc., the appropriate sizes to put into a standard size jewelry item. But don't expect to see mass marketing of this specialized gemstone. Better to find faceted stones of 2 to 5 carats are currently selling at under \$200 per carat, but they are somewhat difficult to find. Chrome Diopside gemstones of 10 and 15 carats are very difficult and next to impossible to find. Even when you can find larger stones, the color can be too dark. And because it is a very brittle stone, when cutting or faceting the gemstone, sometimes the production level is only at 6% of the rough overall weight. Which means we have a 94% loss at times in the rough. So, with as little as 6% of the gemstone making it into the jewelry marketplace, you can see that it is a fairly rare gemstone. The price would normally be through the roof for a stone of this caliber and rarity. However, because it is a soft stone, suppliers are more willing to allow it to reach the open market at a reasonable price.

Diopside can also be found, besides its green color, in yellow and reddish-brown colors and was generally considered a collector's gem until recently. You may have seen on QVC or in the Sharper Image, and maybe some specialty stores, Chrome Diopside being advertised. However, it is generally in smaller sizes, typically called "mellee."

So if you are a person born in the month of May and emerald is your birthstone (and you don't like the milky colors or the expensive price of the quality goods, and have thought of going to a chrome tourmaline, jade or some other green gemstone) you may not have found a stone as pleasing to your pocketbook and as well as to your eye as Chrome Diopside.

Come over to MSG Jewelers, Inc. and let us show you a beautiful selection of fine quality Chrome Diopside. I believe you will be glad you did.

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