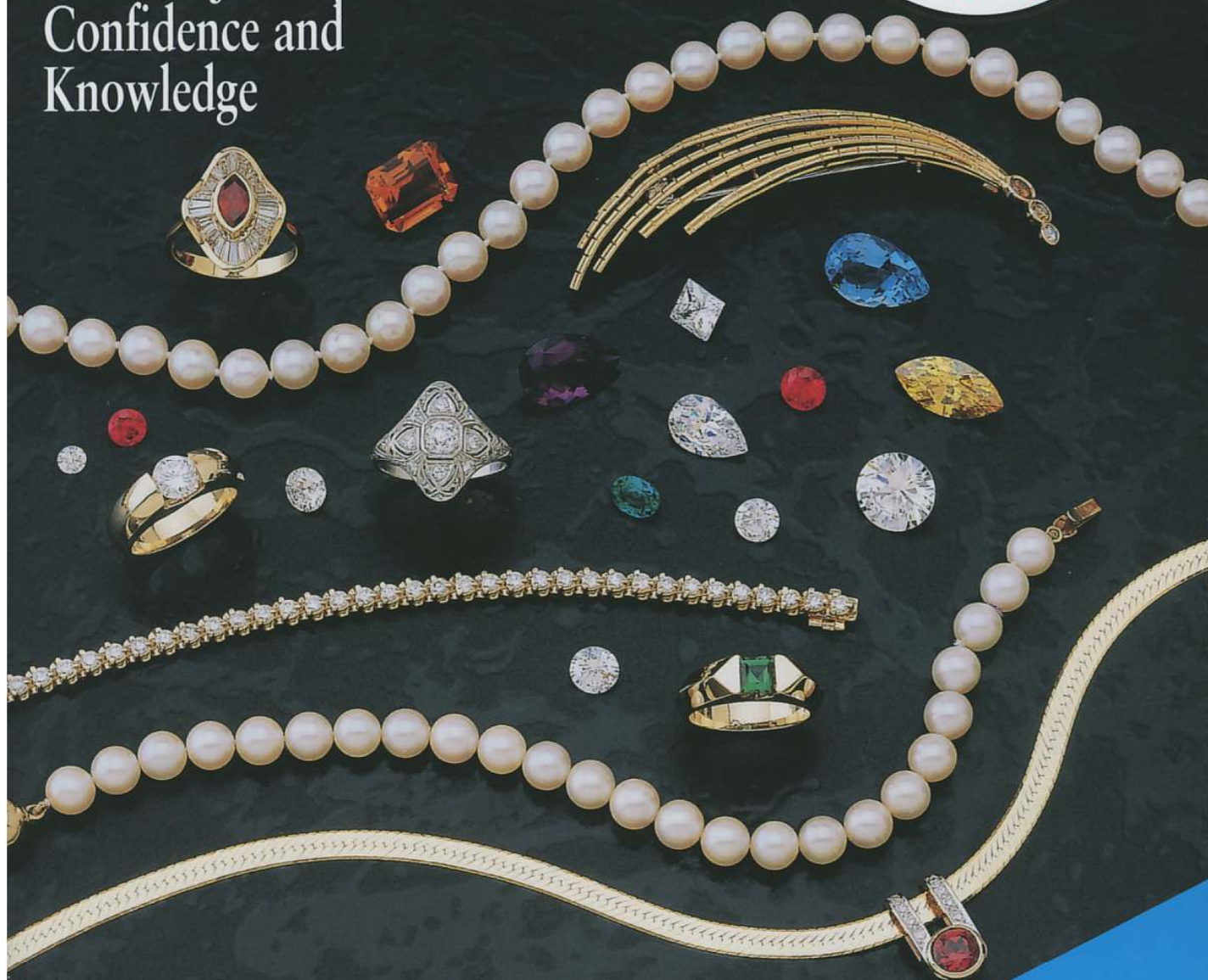


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What Colored Stones Are Available Today?

New Stones Add Exciting Choices

Today, gems are worn primarily for their intrinsic beauty and are chosen mainly for aesthetic reasons, not for mythical attributes. While we may own a birthstone that we wear on occasion, our choice of stones is usually dictated by personal color preferences, economics, and fashion. The world of colored gems today offers us an almost endless choice.

New gems have been discovered and are being made available through the major jewelry companies. If you like red, there are rubies, garnets, red tourmalines, red spinels, and even red diamonds and red “emeralds” (gemologically, red emerald is known as red beryl—see emeralds in chapter 15). If you prefer blue, there are sapphires, iolite, blue spinel, blue topaz, blue tourmaline, tanzanite, and blue diamonds. For those who prefer green, there are emeralds, tsavorite and demantoid (green garnets), green zircons, green tourmalines, green sapphires, peridots, and even green diamonds. And for those who love unusual shades of blue and green, and dazzling neon shades in sparkling, transparent stones, there are the remarkable, rare, Paraiba (also called Hetorita) tourmalines discovered in Brazil in the 1980s. And there is a new gem called Zultanite that even *changes color* from pastel green in outdoor daylight to beige-pink in incandescent light (see chapter 15)!

The following chapters will look at colored stones in more detail and will suggest a variety of stones available in every hue. With colored gems available for almost everyone, in almost any color, at almost any price, you have a wide range of affordable options.

lated gem. Very fine glass imitations are produced that are difficult to distinguish from the genuine. Enhanced, coated, and “stabilized” stones, and reconstructed stones (from turquoise powder bonded in plastic), saturate the marketplace, as does synthetic turquoise. There are techniques to quickly distinguish these imitations or treated stones, so, if in doubt, check it out (and get a complete description on the bill of sale: “genuine, natural turquoise”).

Zircon

Known to the ancients as hyacinth, this gem had many powers, especially for men. While it was known to assist women in childbirth, for men it kept evil spirits and bad dreams away, gave protection against “fascination” and lightning, strengthened their bodies, fortified their hearts, restored appetite, suppressed fat, produced sleep, and banished grief and sadness from the mind.

Zircons are very brilliant transparent stones available in several lovely colors. Unfortunately, many consumers suffer from a strange misconception that zircon is a synthetic or artificial stone rather than a lovely natural creation. Perhaps this belief is based on the fact that they are frequently color treated, as in the blue zircons so often seen. Zircons also occur naturally in yellow, brown, orange, and red.

Many might mistake the colorless zircon for diamond because of its strong brilliance, which, coupled with its very low cost, makes colorless zircon an interesting alternative to diamonds as a stone to offset or dress up colored stones. But care needs to be exercised because zircon is only moderately hard (6½ to 7½ on Mohs’ scale), and it is brittle, so it will chip or abrade easily. For this reason, zircon is recommended for earrings, pendants, brooches, or rings with a protective setting.

Zoisite (see Tanzanite)

Zultanite (Color-Change Diaspore)

Color-change gemstones have long fascinated collectors and connoisseurs, but it is only in recent years that we have started to see interest in the larger consumer marketplace. As more and more people seek unique or unusual gemstones, color-change gems—those that are one color in certain lighting environments but which turn a completely different color in a different type of light—are moving center stage. We have already discussed

the rare, highly sought gem called alexandrite, and mentioned color-change garnets, sapphires, and even diamonds. In recent years another exciting color-change gem was unearthed in Turkey: Zultanite, a color-change variety of a little known material called diaspore.

While diaspore has been known for many years to gemologists and mineralogists, most of it was too heavily included to be considered a "gem." In the 1970s, some very clean specimens began to surface, and then a substantial deposit of beautiful, color-change material was discovered in Turkey. *Zultanite* was introduced into the market, the name meant to conjure up images of the ancient *sultans* who ruled Turkey and the Ottoman Empire. (They had wanted to name it "*Sultanite*," but that name was unavailable!)

Zultanite occurs in lovely, soft pastel colors, changing from a lovely pastel green in daylight to pink, brownish-pink or pinkish-beige in warm, indoor light. The green color is a beautiful shade but the pastel pink tones may be more difficult to see, depending upon the type of light in which it is viewed. Like alexandrite, there is often a brownish undertone to both the green and pink colors. Nonetheless, the color is very pleasing, and very wearable, even if less vivid in color than some other color-change gems. Some women prefer the colors of Zultanite because there is a more subtle contrast and the colors are an especially nice complement to earth tones (green/brown/gold). For some, the colors are more wearable than stones with stronger color and more extreme color change.

It is a gemstone worth seeking out. Its colors are very pleasing, it is a lively stone, and it is relatively hard. It is also available in a wide range of sizes, including 10+ carats, which is an advantage over other color-change stones that rarely exceed 2–3 carats.

All in all, Zultanite is a good choice for jewelry and remains more affordable than most other color-change gemstones. At the moment, prices for fine quality stones (eye-clean and slightly included) range from about \$300–\$400 per carat in 2–3 carat sizes, \$600–\$700 per carat in 5–7 carat sizes, to around \$800–\$1,000 per carat in 7–10 carat sizes. Larger stones or stones of exceptional color and overall quality can cost more, sometimes much more. Keep in mind that pricing is a reflection of supply and demand; supply is still somewhat limited. If demand increases, prices could increase in the foreseeable future.