

# Ruby

*A symbol of wealth and nobility.*

Referred to as the king of precious stones, ruby is the red variety of the mineral corundum. The name comes from the Latin “ruber,” meaning red. Red is the color of our most intense emotions—love and anger, passion and fury. It’s associated with objects of power and desire—like fast cars and red roses. Early cultures valued rubies for their similarity to the redness of the blood that flowed through their veins, and believed rubies held the power of life. Ruby retained its importance with the birth of the western world and became one of the most sought-after gems of European royalty and the upper classes. Many medieval Europeans wore rubies to guarantee health, wealth, wisdom and success in love.

## Color

The color of ruby is caused by traces of chromium. Color is the most significant factor affecting a ruby’s value. Rubies are available in rich red to dark red and orangey red to purplish red. The most sought-after color by collectors worldwide is a deep red sometimes with a hint of purple, called “pigeon’s blood” in the trade.



*Color is the most significant factor affecting a ruby’s value. Fine gems are a pure, vibrant red to slightly purplish red.*



*Corundum may show a phenomenon called asterism. This star effect usually appears as a six-ray star pattern across a cabochon-cut stone’s curved surface.*

## Clarity

Inclusion-free ruby is practically nonexistent so the value varies with how visible the inclusions are. Inclusions can also impact a ruby’s durability, especially if there is a surface-reaching fracture. Typical clarity characteristics include thin mineral inclusions called needles. Rutile needles, or “silk,” can sometimes contribute positively to a gem’s appearance.

## Sources

The most famous ruby mines are in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) but rubies can also be found in Vietnam, Mozambique, Madagascar, Kenya, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## Treatments

Heat treatment is often used to improve the color or clarity of a ruby. Heat can also cause some fractures to “heal” in certain conditions. Lower quality material may have surface-reaching fractures filled with a glass to decrease their visibility and make the gem more transparent.



Images courtesy: AF Greenwood; Bear Essentials; Evan Caplan

## Major Sources

Afghanistan, Greenland, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Vietnam

## Mineral

Corundum

## Mohs Hardness

9

## Toughness

Excellent

## Color

Red

## Birthstone

July

## Care and Cleaning

Warm, soapy water is always safe. Ultrasonic and steam cleaners are usually safe for untreated, heat-treated, and lattice diffusion treated stones. Fracture-filled, cavity-filled or dyed material should only be cleaned with a damp cloth. Various chemicals, even mild substances like lemon juice, can cause change in some glass-filled rubies.