

# THE BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY



*Copyright Steve Briskin 2018*

*Topaz, Pakistan*

## TOPAZ FOR NOVEMBER

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About Us: <https://hgms.org/>

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Upcoming Meetings and Events: <https://hgms.org/events/>

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Calendar: <https://hgms.org/calendar>

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Officers and Contact Information: <https://hgms.org/contact-us/>

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### BACKBENDER'S GAZETTE SUBMISSION DEADLINES

*Articles are due on the 15th day of the month before the date on the BBG issue.*

*Copy is due for the next issue by the 15th of this month. Email content to [editor@hgms.org](mailto:editor@hgms.org)*



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*by Nancy English*

October and November are the months when we all get to participate in the Annual Show and the future administration of HGMS. As Volunteer Coordinator, I am looking for Show volunteers to fill 125 half-day shifts during the Show, people to help set up on Thursday, November 10, and people to tear it all down and pack it up on Sunday evening, November 13. As President, I am looking for new elected officers for 2023.

Here is more about the 69th Annual HGMS Gem, Mineral, Jewelry, and Fossil Show. The Show Committee invited volunteers to the Annual Postcard Party on October 8. Fourteen of us labeled 7,000 postcards to be mailed to people interested in our Show. We were rewarded with Domino's pizza. On the evening of October 8, the Show Committee provided the barbeque meat to sponsor the first Show Potluck Dinner and Auction since the pandemic. It was a smaller crowd than pre-Covid years, but we had a good time and enthusiastic bidders snagged some good bargains.

Only two Show events are left. The Show, November 11, 12, and 13, and the Annual Volunteer Appreciation party is on November 19. This party will be at Scott Singleton's home. The Show Committee provides everything but alcohol. BYOB. If you have volunteered for anything at the Club this year or the Show you are welcome to join us. Watch the weekly eblast for more details.

Or stay informed by signing up to volunteer for the Show! Being a volunteer allows you to see the Show for free all weekend. We draw two Door Prizes per shift. Consider signing up for shifts on Friday, November 11, especially. That is the day HGMS fulfills its Mission by dedicating ourselves to the education of school-age children about earth sciences.

Public and private schools start arriving at 10:00 a.m. by the busload. The Homeschoolers come in the afternoon arriving in one-hour shifts. Volunteers sign them in and provide handouts. The kids learn about rocks by completing a scavenger hunt; going to dealers and Club Section tables to find the answers to questions for the hunt. The Dino Dig sees more kids than at any other time. The Youth Area has rock games and displays. On Saturday we provide a Boy Scout program for Webelos to earn a science badge.

Selling tickets, operating the Information Booth, providing Security, and overseeing the Hospitality Room, are a few of the areas where members excel. We will need Ticket Takers, Swap Area Cashiers, and people who like to help kids in the Dino Dig and Youth Area. We are fortunate to have students fill in for jobs we do not have enough members to fill. But members are the foundation of the volunteer effort.

During the October 25, General Meeting I hope to present the 2023 slate of elected officers. The Board will welcome a new 1st Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary during the November 22 General Meeting. Please contact me at [president@hgms.org](mailto:president@hgms.org) if you are interested in these important positions. I look forward to working with all of you.

## VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The November program will be given by Sigrid Stewart on Vocanoes National Park. There should also be plenty of discussion on the Show and how everything went.

## SECTION REPORTS

As always, please see the [Upcoming Programs](#) section under Events on the HGMS website to learn more about planned future meetings.

### BEADING SECTION (3RD SATURDAY AT 12:30 PM)

For the November 19th program we may work on a peyote-stitch Christmas Tree ornament.

Would you like to receive notifications about upcoming Beading Group activities? E-mail [beading@hgms.org](mailto:beading@hgms.org) to be added.

### DAY LIGHT SECTION (1ST WEDNESDAY AT 1:00 PM)

All programs are \$5.00 unless stted otherwise and the fee is paid at the meeting. Remember to register with Nancy Searle at [daylight@hgms.org](mailto:daylight@hgms.org) in advance so we will have the needed materials for everyone.

- On November 2nd, we will work on Christmas ornanments instead of broom straw casting. We'll do that next year!
- On December 7th, the Section will host out Annual holiday party, pot luck lunch, gift exchange, and planning meeting for the 2023 sessions - come with your ideas of what you would like to do next year!

### GEMSTONES AND FACETING (2ND THURSDAY AT 6:30 PM IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM)

Next meetings are November 10, and December 8, 2022 .

We are looking into ways to keep the section interactive between our once-a-month meetings. That way we can better answer questions and keep an archive of the interesting things we've come across as a group. I'm currently tossing the idea of using a Discord channel as our means of communication which is easier to navigate than other social media platforms and comes with group voice, text, and video streaming built in.

### LAPIDARY AND SILVERSMITHING SECTION (3RD MONDAY AT 7:00 PM)

November 21, 2022 starting at 7:00 pm - Pizza Party and Holiday Ornament making. We'll have a nice selection of small to medium polished thin slabs for participants to turn into

ornaments. Bring your Show purchases for Show 'n Tell.

On October 17th, Tony demonstrated cutting and polishing larger display slabs, using our large slab saws. Rough material was provided for participants to cut and learn to feel comfortable using the equipment. He also demonstrated using the handheld orbital polisher to get a nice polish on a slab. The key is using fresh grinding pads in good condition!

### **MINERAL SECTION (3RD WEDNESDAY AT 7:30 PM (VIA ZOOM))**

- On November 16th, Steve Blyskal will present his program on the minerals of Naica, Chihuahua, to members of the Section.
- The December meeting will be a Christmas Party.

On October 19th, Steve Steinke spoke about collecting minerals in various localities and mines of Southern California.

### **PALEO SECTION (3RD TUESDAY AT 7:30 PM)**

November 22nd meeting to be announced.

The October 18 paleo meeting was a dual in-person and Zoom meeting (our first hybrid meeting) thanks to the efforts of Jeanean Slamen. The topic is "Evidence in Texas that the Chicxulub Meteorite Did Not Kill the Dinosaurs". We used the club's new camera that can zoom in closely, so so people could bring show and tell.

Dr. Neal said: "I am going to present evidence from Texas that proves that the Chicxulub meteorite did not kill the dinosaurs or end the Cretaceous. You can see the evidence in Cottonmouth Creek where the stratigraphy shows clearly that the end of the Cretaceous happened 6 feet and 100,000 years higher in the section".

Dr. Keller from Princeton developed all this evidence and yet nearly everyone says something else. They are all using precision age dating of the sediments and that data has an error bar of about 100,000 years. Come and see the Texas evidence and make up your own mind."

### **YOUTH SECTION (1ST AND 3RD SATURDAYS FROM 10:00 AM TO 12:00 PM)**

We will continue our regular activities working in the shop and will also be preparing for the Annual Show. Meetings November 5 & 19, December 3, & 17 2022.

## **SHOP AND BUILDING NEWS**

*by Neal Immega*

Mens Room Door Locked - When I arrived one Saturday, I found the mens room door locked and no one inside. I can not figure how that happened. It was no problem to fix because the screws holding it together were accessible from the outside. The lock can also be opened by inserting a flat bladed screwdriver into the handle.

Titan Grinder Noise - Sometimes the Titan grinder will not start spinning or it will make

noise as it does so. The cure is very easy. Just slide the water tray forward about 1/2 an inch. You just need to make sure that the grinder water tray does not contact the wheels. This happens when people lean on the grinder trays when working.

Extension Cord - Someone tried to corral the red extension cord used in the lecture hall by tying it in a row of slipknots. I have seen that work very effectively for rope, but copper extension cords are stiffer and the process did not work well at all to make a neat bundle. Please stop. We are going to put the cord on a reel.

Saw Repair - Larry and I got the Frantom back together and did a successful power on test of the replaced gears on the power feed. It will soon be back in operation after the box the holds the gear grease is put in place and filled. A very successful minor repair.

Polishing Shaft - the bearings of the polishing shaft (1200, 3000, and 8000 grit) were noisy and I replaced them. I also switched to cling wrap to protect the bearings from water from aluminum foil to reduce the noise. Note to Nancy English - a no cost fix.

For the October 8 show party. I was asked to supply paleo stuff for the October 8 show party. These are trilobite tracks collected in 1974 by me in Indiana.



## EDUCATION

We are seeking teachers to expand our class selections. Specifically: PMC, Dichroic Glass, Enameling, Mosaics, and bead weaving instructors are needed. Contact [Classes@HGMS.org](mailto:Classes@HGMS.org) for more information on teaching or taking classes. We are planning to offer more short & easy summer-time classes for those interested in making some fun projects.

Santa's Workshop Sunday December 6th: The goal of this workshop is to have a day at the clubhouse where people can participate in paid for classes to make seasonal gifts. I envision relatively fast and simple projects where someone could make two or three

different gifts over the day. Activities are to be doable by beginner to intermediate level students. The goal is to promote interest in HGMS activities and to have fun making some nice items. I would love to include each section in this event. I have a layout for the meeting room that I will finalize when I know who is participating and we could use the shops and center classroom. I do not envision this as a sale. The Board has not approved a trade show.

If you have a project to teach, please e-mail [classes@HGMS.org](mailto:classes@HGMS.org) with a contact number, project description, and photograph by Noon on Thursday, October 13 th .

2022 SHOW CLASSES have been finalized. We are offering 6-classes during the show. Take a break and make something beautiful while visiting the show. See [HGMS.org](http://HGMS.org) website, under Education / Classes for a full listing and information on how to register for these classes.

Jeanean Slamen is preparing to offer additional enameling classes including: Enameling Surfaces, Foils & Wire in Enamels, Drawing & Painting on Enamel Surfaces, Textured Metal for Enameling, Raku & Crackle Enamel, Making Settings for Your Enamels. She is a great teacher!

## QUIPS

*By Ernie Hopfinger, in Chaparral Chatter  
via THE ROADRUNNER VOLUME 54 ISSUE # 9 SEPTEMBER 2022*

My back is tired.  
My hands are sore.  
I'm digging slower than before.  
At first I'm kneeling, then I sit,  
I begin to think it's time to quit.  
From up the hill there comes a cry----  
A new-found rock is held up high.  
Whose back is tired?  
Whose hands are sore?  
I'm digging faster than before.

## ANNUAL SHOW NEWS

### VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ANNUAL SHOW:

The Annual Show is organized by the Show Committee, but it is actually put on by our members through your volunteer efforts. We have a large number of positions that need volunteer help in order to run a successful event.

There are 125 shifts to fill over the 3-day Show: such as the Info booth, Ticket Booth, Ticket Takers, Security, Youth Education (Youth Area, Dino Dig, Kids Day on Friday, Scout Geology Merit Badge on Saturday), set-up on Thursday, November 10, and take-down on Sunday, November 13.

Please sign up online at <https://hgms.org/annual-show/volunteering/>. And remember that because we value our volunteers, we will be hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Party the weekend after the Show, and all volunteers are invited!

**SHOW TICKETS - PURCHASE ONLINE FOR PRE-SALE!**

This year show tickets will be available for purchase online on the HGMS website for both HGMS members and the general public.

The link to buy tickets is on the Annual Show page (<https://hgms.org/annual-show/>).

We will be advertising this heavily on Facebook and Instagram and in our eblasts.

However, for HGMS members, you can use the discount code 2OFF to get \$2 off of the ticket price (for a price of \$7 since tickets are now \$9 for the general public). You can use this code to get an unlimited number of tickets. Each will have its own QR code and serial number to keep track of those redeemed at the show.

We recommend that you take advantage of this discount because the Show Committee is no longer mailing out tickets to members. (That's right! Beginning this year, the Show Committee is no longer mailing tickets out to members for pre-sale purposes. This will save mailing expenses as well as a lot of the work in-volved with managing the mailed tickets.)

**DISPLAY AT OCTAVIA FIELDS LIBRARY**

*By Sigrid Stewart and Steve Blyskal*

For the second time, Steve Blyskal and Sigrid Stewart were asked to put in a mineral display at the Octavia Fields Library. Naturally we said yes, because the library is located just west of the Humble Civic Center, where our Annual Show will be staged November 11th through 13th. The first time we created such a display was back in 2019, and while a lot has changed in the intervening years, librarians are still on the lookout for anything that will stimulate the interest of their patrons!



*Display area at Octavia Fields Library*

- The process for constructing a display is straight-forward:
- First, locate larger and heavier specimens for the bottom of the case.
- Then, pick out medium-sized specimens for the first shelf.
- Finally, pull out some polished slabs and lighter pieces for the top shelf.
- Find the big box of miscellaneous stands.
- Print out the special labels Steve designed to fold at the bottom so as to hold the label upright to be easily viewed.
- Dig out flats and boxes to hold the wrapped specimens for transport and head to Humble.

The display recess is in the entrance to the library and has two long glass shelves with a large area underneath. After we arrived, we borrowed a library cart to hold boxes while we unwrapped specimens and began placing the largest ones in the bottom of the recess where their weight would not be a factor. Three posters from past Shows went up in the back of the area. We worked our way through all the boxes in a couple of hours, then placed the labels. Then it was time to step back and do a little tweaking to get the right look overall. And last, we added Show postcards to the shelves to help promote the upcoming Annual Show. We left some at the front desk too.

People coming into the library expressed their interest and support and watched to see what else we would unwrap. We can certainly hope that the library's customers will enjoy our display for the next three weeks and come to our show to learn more about minerals.

## TOPAZ FOR NOVEMBER

Topaz is a silicate mineral, but at Mohs Hardness of 8 it is harder than Quartz, which is 7. In its purest state, Topaz is colorless but trace impurities give natural crystals shades of blue, brown, orange, yellow, green and pink to red. Treatment with radiation or heat can intensify colors considerably. Precious Topaz, the November birthstone, is orange to yellow or pink. Brazilian Imperial Topaz can be a desirable darker sherry color

The chemical formula is  $\text{Al}_2\text{SiO}_4(\text{F},\text{OH})_2$  with, of course, the colorful impurities. It crystallizes in the orthorhombic system and the crystal class is dipyramidal. It is a member of the category of nesosilicate minerals along with other minerals such as olivine, garnet, and zircon, meaning it contains orthosilicate ion tetrahedra  $[\text{SiO}_4]^{4-}$  in its structure.



So, how can you tell a golden topaz from a similarly colored citrine?

Topaz, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Photograph by Didier Descouens, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6952739>

By hardness (8 vs. 7), refractive index (1.606 vs. 1.4585), and specific gravity (3.49 to 3.57 vs. 2.65). Supposedly, it can also be distinguished from quartz by a slippery feeling. A crystal or unset stone will sink in a solution of bromoform or methylene iodide while quartz will float. Useful to know if you don't want to scratch a stone to test the hardness!



*Topaz, Utah*

But where can you find them? Silicic igneous rocks are the hosts, usually pegmatites in granite as in Park County, Colorado, or cavities in rhyolite, like those found at Utah's Topaz Mountain. Brazil is an important producer of Topaz, and it is also found in Russia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Germany, Norway, Sweden Japan, Czech Republic, Mexico, Zimbabwe and Nigeria.

If you are not a November baby, take heart: blue Topaz is the state gemstone of Texas! Mason County, Texas is noted for clear and light blue Topaz found in the Precambrian granites of the area.

References: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topaz>

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Faceted topaz gemstones by Michelle Jo - Own work, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9725342>

Cover Photo by Steve Blyskal

*Six lovely  
faceted  
topazes*



Want to find out more? Check out these sites:

<http://coloradoearthscience.blogspot.com/2010/11/topaz-crystals-from-petra-placer.html>  
<https://texascooppower.com/hunting-topaz/>

For information about Imperial Topaz:

<https://www.gia.edu/gia-faq-imperial-topaz>  
<https://thecrystalcouncil.com/crystals/imperial-topaz>

## **SOMETHING ABOUT FACETING**

*By Lola Lamb*

*THE ROADRUNNER VOLUME 54 ISSUE # 10 OCTOBER 2022*

I was at a local restaurant the other day and you know how you will look around at the surrounding tables while waiting for our food. I small group of people were at a nearby table and while I was not eavesdropping, I could not help overhearing their conversations in the crowded conditions. I must admit they seemed to be a very different type of people. They mentioned they were all FACETERS. I was not familiar with that word but guessed it must be a sorority or high society club.

They began talking about their PATTERNS AND CUTS. That was right down my alley because I use a " pattern" when I "cut" out my husband's shirts or my dresses when I sew.

The man at the end of the table mentioned having trouble getting a good POLISH on his TABLE. He should see the "polish" on my grandmother's old "table". They just don't find wood like that anymore. His best bet is to get a good old table, I guess.

One little old lady said she had good luck with the PAVILION, but could not get the STARS on the CROWN to meet. She must be awful rich to have her own "pavilion". We always use the one at the city park for our picnics. I sure didn't understand about trying to get the "stars" to meet the "crown". I thought most of the Hollywood stars were pretty well received by the royal family. Of course, I don't travel in those circles much.

One very pretty young lady mentioned she did some CHEATING recently. I was shocked as she looked to be a very honest type of person. Sometimes you just never know. I was raised and taught it was always pays to be honest.

Well, I almost dropped my salad fork when they started talking about their GIRDLES. After all it was mixed company and in a public place. That didn't seem to bother them though. One said hers was too THICK, another said his was too THIN, and still another said his was UNEVEN. Thick, thin, uneven-----right strange talk I'd say. Everyone knows a girdle is to smooth out the bulges and give a smooth line. One man said he even POLISHED HIS GIRDLE. Seemed odd to me that a man would be wearing one anyway, but I sure don't understand what he used on it. I use plain old soap and water to wash mine. I was a little relieved when they went on to another subject.

I'm not real sure where these people were from. They talked about ANGLES and DEGREES and MAINS. Guess their main street must have angled across town instead of straight north and south like it does in Big Spring. Wherever they were from, it must have

been up north, because they said it was usually 39 and 42 degrees.

One quite young lad said his stone FLEW OFF THE DOP. In my younger years I've thrown stones on the lake like all kids do, but mine never flew. I couldn't even get them to skip. I've always heard the expression "flying off the handle" but never heard of "flying off the dop." Don't exactly know what a "dop" is. Is it like a dab? This same young lad said he was having trouble with his TRANSFER. Never did hear where he was trying to "transfer" to.

By now they had received their meals, so conversation slowed somewhat. They still periodically spoke of the LAPS. They talked of CERAMIC, 3000 and LEAD TIN. They really lost me there. I only have one "lap", the one where my napkin was laying. My grand kids enjoy sitting on it a lot. Maybe they were talking about relay races or sports car races. They did say something about running the "lap" at a slow speed or high speed. Maybe they were joggers.

I'll say one thing---their conversation really covered a wide range of subjects. By now I had finished my meal and had to keep an appointment, but I'll never forget that group of strange-talking people. They seemed friendly enough, as another man came by, talked briefly with them, and they said they would mail him a set of PATTERNS AND COMPETITION FORMS.

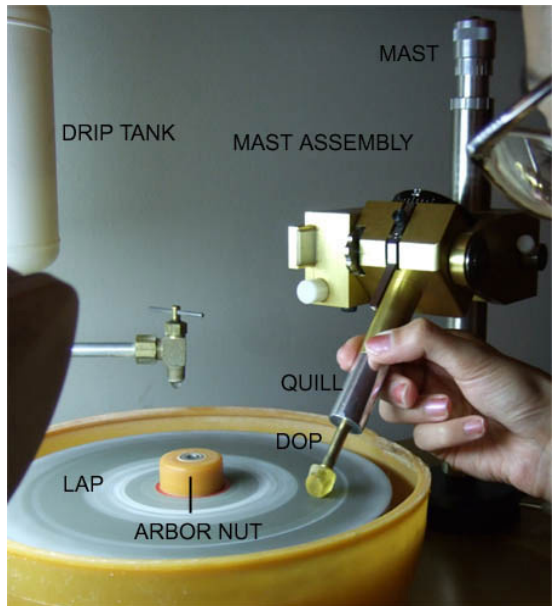
Maybe our paths will cross again, and I'll boldly walk over and ask "WHAT KIND OF CLUB DO YOU BELONG TO ANYWAY"?

Written by Lola Lamb and published in The Roadrunner 1988

According to Lola, "I was browsing old copies of bulletins and ran across this old article. Had forgotten all about writing it. It was written in fun back in the days when our club had members very active in the field of faceting ".

For the non-facetors among the readers of this publication:  
Visit [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faceting\\_machine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faceting_machine)

Photo by Alextryan  
Public Domain, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14786346>



## THE ALWAYS FAITHFUL FEW

by Fran Henderson

from the Roadrunner Issue #8 August 2022

via Editors Symposium Arizona

When the meeting's called to order  
And you look around the room,  
You're sure to see some faces  
That from out the shadows loom.

They are always at the meetings  
There they stay until it's through,  
The ones that I would mention  
Are the always faithful few

They fill the many offices  
And are always on the spot,  
No matter what the weather  
Though it might be awful hot.

It may be dark and rainy,  
But they are tried and true  
The ones that you rely on  
Are the always faithful few.

'I'here are lots of worthy members  
Who will come when in the mood,  
When everything' s convenient  
They can do a little good.

They're a factor in the meeting  
And are necessary too,  
But the ones who never fail us  
Are the always faithful few.

If it were not for these faithful  
Whose shoulders at the wheel,  
Keep the society moving  
Without a halt or reel.

What would be the fate of meetings  
Where we claim so much to do  
They surely would be failures  
If we lacked the faithful few.



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Amethyst Scepter, Zimbabwe. Photo by Steve Blyskal

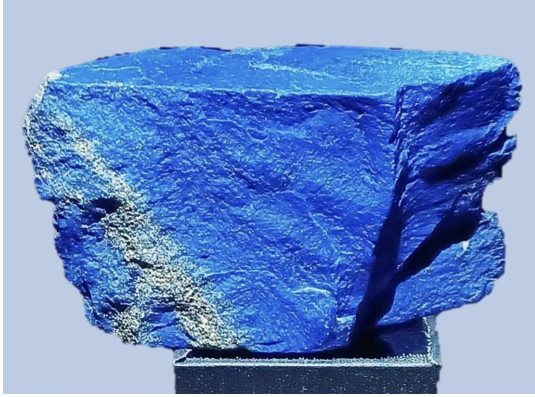
## PRECIOUS STONES - MINERALS ONLY?

By Don Shurtz, Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club of Dallas

Reprinted from Chips and Chatter, September 2022 Vol. 56, Issue 9

What is a precious stone? A precious stone is likely an expensive, cut stone. In recent times, there are only four precious stones – diamond, emerald, ruby, and sapphire. Ac-

cording to various sources, precious stones are characterized by their quality, rarity, and beauty. They are all minerals. In fact, two of the stones are the same mineral, corundum variety ruby and corundum variety sapphire. In truth, they are called precious stones because of marketing. There is nothing else that makes these stones unique from other cut stones. They are not even the rarest or most costly (dollar per carat).



*Lapis Lazuli*

Lapis Lazuli, often shortened to just Lapis, has been considered a precious stone in the Indus Valley Civilizations that covered most of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The funeral mask of Tutankhamun was made of Lapis Lazuli, and you can rest assured that they only used the finest materials for his burial. A few hundred years later, Lapis Lazuli was used to make Ultramarine pigment which was used as a blue pigment by some of the great artists of the Renaissance era. So is Lapis Lazuli a precious stone?

It is not a mineral, but rather a metamorphic rock. Lapis Lazuli is composed of four minerals, Lazurite, Pyrite, Calcite, and Sodalite. The major mineral in Lapis is Lazurite, the blue mineral that gives Lapis its predominant color. It is softer than Quartz coming in on the Mohs Scale at 5 to 5.5. It is rather soft for everyday jewelry, but you will often see large cabochons fashioned as pendants. The stone is well protected by its mounting and is likely to be worn only on special occasions. Lapis Lazuli is soft enough that it can be carved. Many relics of carved Lapis have been found, the oldest dating back to 7570 BC.

As mentioned, Tutankhamun's funeral mask was made from gold and Lapis Lazuli. It dates back to around 1330 BC. Today Lapis Lazuli is mined primarily in Afghanistan. Mines in Russia and in Peru also produce Lapis Lazuli. It can also be found in other locations, including the United States (Colorado and California)

Lapis Lazuli does not make the top 10 list for the most valuable gemstones (per carat). At the bottom line, is Lapis Lazuli a Precious Stone? Considering the beauty of a cut Lapis Lazuli, I would agree with the people of the Indus Valley Civilization.

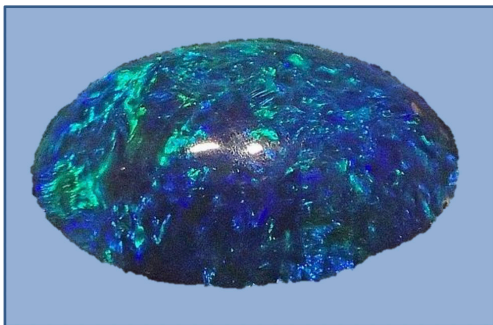
As another example of a non-mineral that could be considered a precious stone, I would offer Opal as a great choice.



*Tutankhamun Funeral Mask*

Common opal probably would not be in that classification, but precious opal, including black opal, should be considered. Opal is not a mineral, but rather a mineraloid. It is not classified as a mineral as the atoms are not arranged in a definite, repeatable crystalline structure. Very small spheres (nano-sized) of Silicon Dioxide form in multiple, close-spaced layers that form a diffracting grating. This diffracting grating causes the flash of colors in the opal. The spacing of the layers and the incident angle of the light determine where the color will be found in precious opal. Like Lapis Lazuli, it is softer than Quartz coming in at a Mohs hardness of 5.5 to 6. It is too soft to be fashioned into everyday jewelry, but if it is protected by its mounting, it is fine as jewelry for special occasions. It would be best as a pendant or in earrings.

Black Opals are on many of the lists of the 10 most expensive gemstones. So precious opals meet many of the criteria for precious stones and are occasionally found on more modern lists that go beyond the original four precious stones. Precious Opal's name says it is precious, and it certainly gets my vote as a precious stone.



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- Most Valuable Gemstones in the World, The Spruce Crafts, <https://www.thespruce-crafts.com/most-valuable-gemstones-in-the-world-4105417>
- Lapis Lazuli rough, picture by Don Shurtz of a specimen on display at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science
- Precious Opal cabochon, picture, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Precious\\_opal](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Precious_opal), licensed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic Mask of Tutankhamun, By Roland Unger - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=48168958>

## NOVEMBER BENCH TIPS

Smart Solutions for Your Jewelry Making Problems  
[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)

### PRE-MADE BEZEL CUPS

As a general rule of thumb I assume it's going to take me 15 - 20 minutes to make a bezel

for an ordinary cabochon, so for some projects buying pre-made cups can save a lot of time. But if you go this route, keep in mind three things. First, try to get cups made from fine silver, not sterling. Fine silver is softer and burnishes over the stone more easily.

Second, you may have trouble matching the shape and size of the stone with the shape and size of the bezel cup. Purchased cups can only be found in a limited number of standard sizes. You may have to adjust your choice of gemstone to match the cup. The other consideration is that pre-made cups often have fairly low side walls. While these are fine for low-dome stones, they're not dependable for stones with steep side walls.

Lastly before setting, check the fit of your gemstone in the cup, particularly around the bottom. The bottom corners of a stamped cup are much more rounded than a bezel you would fabricate yourself. This causes a problem with stones that have a sharp edge around the bottom. Burnishing the bezel over one of these stones will place a lot of stress on the stone and may cause it to crack. To avoid this, I round off the bottom edge



*Pre-made Bezel cups*

of the stone with a diamond file (or use sandpaper on soft stones).

## **DIVIDERS**

A set of dividers is a tool I find very useful in laying out the geometry of a piece I'm making. It has two needle-like tips with an adjustment to set the spacing between them.

They can be used to transfer a measurement. Let's say you need a 7mm wide strip of sheet metal. Set the spacing between the divider tips to 7 mm on the ruler. Then lay the



sheet on the bench, put one tip against the edge, and run the dividers down the edge scribing a line parallel to the edge.

Dividers can be used to mark equal segments of a line or arc. For instance, assume a line between A and B that might be straight or curved, and you want to divide it into 5 equal lengths. Set the dividers to an estimate of the distance. Starting at Point A, use the dividers to mark off five lengths along the line. If you end up short of Point B, lengthen the distance on the dividers. If you end up overshooting Point B, shorten the length of your dividers. After a few tries, the length on the dividers will be the exact distance you need to mark the 5 segments.

Dividers can let you quickly find the center of a circular disk. With one tip of the dividers at the edge of the disk, set the other tip to an estimate of where the center might be. Fix one tip of the dividers at the 3 o'clock position and scribe an arc with the other tip near the center. Do this again from the 6 o'clock, 9 o'clock, and 12 o'clock positions. The arcs at the center will form a small four-sided box. The center of the box is at the center of the disk.

If you enjoy these tips on jewelry making, see many more in the sample chapters from these two books:

> Bench Tips 1 - <http://amzn.to/1Z6hQ06>

> Bench Tips 2 - <http://amzn.to/2KCygh4>



[Click to see all of Brad's books on Amazon](#)

**HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**  
**OCTOBER 4, 2022**  
*By Nancy English*

X	President— Nancy English	x	Beading— Maggie Manley
X	1st Vice President—Sarah Metsa	X	Day Light—Fred Brueckner
X	2nd Vice President—Beverly Mace		Gemstones & Faceting—Randy Carlson
X	Treasurer—Michele Marsel	X	Lapidary & Silversmithing—Richard Good
X	Secretary—Sharon Halton	X	Mineral—Ray Kizer
	Past President —Sigrid Stewart	X	Paleontology—Mike Dawkins

President Nancy English called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

A quorum was present.

There were no non-voting members in attendance.

**PRESIDENT’S COMMENTS:** The president spoke about Board’s replacements and the future candidates for unfilled positions.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Richard Good moved via email to approve the minutes of the September 6, 2022, Board of Directors’ Meeting. Michele Marsel seconded the motion. It was voted on via email and passed on September 19, 2022.

**Treasurer’s Report:** Treasurer Michele Marsel sent the Treasurer’s Report to members at 9:05 a.m. on October 4, 2022, Live Oak Bank announced the interest on our savings account went up to 2.30%.

Maggie Manley requested clarification on the Education budget. Michele explained the specifics.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

BBG Notice: Beverly Mace notified members on October 1, 2022, the online version of the October 2022 BBG is available on the HGMS Website.

Donations, Sales, Auction Committee (DSAC): Michele Marsal

- The Donations Committee provided a large selection of Lapidary and Mineral items for the Show Auction on October 8, 2022. Neal Immega is also donating some Paleo items (see this week's eBlast for a description).
- A Chairperson for donations is needed by the end of the year when Michele will step down.

Education Committee: Maggie Manley spoke about the plans that she and Jeanean Slamen are putting together as a "Santa's Workshop" with short-duration classes that will allow people to leave with a nice gift for holiday gift-giving. Potentially, additional classes will be available for the children.

Membership Committee: Beverly Mace reported new and renewed memberships in September.

Member counts	New
Singles	4
Couples	0
Families	0
Youth	0

Safety/Policy Committee Michele Marsel:

- Due to constraints in Michele's schedule and the need to find someone to complete shop drawings, bid requests are not complete.
- Richard and Michele are working together to push forward and obtain bids to present at the November BOD meeting with the Committee's final recommendation.
- Nancy will schedule a Committee meeting to review bids and a report will be sent as pre-read ahead of the November BOD call.
- Nancy recommends that we publish the "scope of work" we voted on last month as part of the minutes in the BBG. It was decided that information will not be released to the general membership until we have the contracts agreed upon. This information will then be released as a public relations campaign so members will see what the future will hold for them.
- Richard Good and Neal Immega discussed the Lapidary Shop slab saws and the need to pare down prior to renovation work. We will not be able to fit the seven existing slab saws under a restaurant oil hood, and Neal agreed to sell the two (2) Dr. Rocks saws since the manufacturer is out of business and parts are no longer available. They were advertised in the October 2 eBlast for sale by email auction.

Scholarship Committee: Mike Sommers President English emailed Mike to tell him a member has donated \$1,000.00 towards the 2023 Scholarship fund and \$575.00 was donated towards HGMS Scholarships in memory of Bob Fischer.

Show Committee: Next meeting is October 11, 2022. The President has already received twelve volunteers.

## SECTION REPORTS

Beading Section in person: third Saturday, 12:30 p.m., October 15, November 19, and December 17, 2022.

Day Light Section in person: first Wednesday, 1:00 p.m., October 5, November 2, and December 7, 2022.

Gemstones and Faceting Section Zoom Hybrid: second Thursday, 6:30 p.m., October 13, November 10, and December 8, 2022.

Lapidary and Silversmithing Section in person: third Monday, 7:00 p.m., October 17, 2022, November 21, and December 18, 2022.

Mineral Section Zoom program: third Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., October 19, November 23, and December 21, 2022.

Paleo Section in person: third Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., October 18, November 22, and December 20, 2022.

Youth Section in person: first and third Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. to Noon., October 1 & 15, November 5 & 19, December 3, & 17 2022.

## OLD BUSINESS

The 2022 Roster was sent to Katy Printers on September 26 and should be mailed to members in October.

Nominating Committee: To help the future 1st Vice President Clyde McMeans has been contacting rock-related non-profits and businesses to help find programs for next year. He reported via email, "There are some local folks - Angel's Rocks & Minerals, Katy Rock Shop, Jeanne's Rocks & Minerals - that might be interested in doing a program. Would it be permissible for them to sell items as part of their program?" As long as the presentation is advertised without discussion of "sales."

Sarah will continue to send out the information for the eBlast next year.

Divider Partition for Main Room: Maggie Manley has retracted her suggestion for the dividers.

Maggie also suggested that we look into a system for hearing-aid-equipped members.

Maggie requested clarification about the "air return" system and other changes in the Air Abrasive room. The room will be provided with an A/C inlet and air return but there is already an air cleaning system in that room that is often NOT turned on. Also, if a "rain-bow" water-filtered vacuum can be found for users to remove the dust then the room will be fine.

2022 AMFS and SCFMS Convention: Ray Kizer has agreed to represent HGMS at the October Convention on October 13, 14, 15, & 16, 2022. John A. Alario Center, 2000 Westwego Blvd., Westwego, LA 70094. Michele Marsel made a motion to reimburse Ray for his hotel and gasoline for the AMFS Convention. Mike Dawkins seconded the motion, and it was passed.

Ray will contact Phyllis George to see if there is anything he needs to do as the representative of HGMS.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Melbourne, Australia: Sharon Halton discussed the fact that she has been in touch with the Essendon Gem and Lapidary Club in Melbourne, Australia, and is planning an in-person visit to their shop on January 10, 2023, when she is in Melbourne. She will be happy to take pictures to show other members.

The next Board of Directors Zoom meeting will be on the first Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. November 1, 2022

The next General Meeting will be on the fourth Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. October 25, 2022. Sarah Metsa will present Glow and Gleam; Tonight is a Scream. Sarah Metsa reported that the Halloween program for the General Meeting will be about "all things that glow in the dark." She will be preparing goodie bags for youth members and has requested that the presentation begins before the actual business component of the General Meeting. It was approved to begin her program at 7:00 p.m. and have the business meeting after the snack break.

There will be an RSVP button on the Sunday e-blast so that Sarah has some idea of how many kids will come.

Show Dinner and Auction: Nancy English asked for a show of hands for who would be at the October 8 Show Dinner and Auction and what they might bring.

Adjourn: Ray Kizer moved to adjourn. Fred Brueckner seconded the motion; passed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

## **HOUSTON GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY GENERAL MEETING MINUTES**

October 25, 2022

*By Sharon Halton*

The evening's Halloween-themed program presentation was given by Sarah Metsa prior to the General Meeting beginning at 7:10. Sarah introduced herself to the members who had never been to the meetings.

New attendees included Robin Holzer and her two daughters Cate and Samantha Blackwell. Guest: Yvonne and Alberto Hernandez attended with their daughter Cathy who is a member of the Youth Group.

The presentation was "Things that Glow" and examples of glowing rocks and beads were shown in person. There were "goodie bags" available for the children and a "kids" door prize which was won by Cate Blackwell.

Sarah asked for the members to stay after the program and refreshments to attend the business meeting.

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

President English called the meeting to order at 8:07 p.m.

Thank you, Sharon Halton, for the refreshments tonight.

Nancy welcomed everyone. There were 24 attendees. Three people attended by Zoom.

New members: As noted above, Robin Holzer and daughters Cate and Samantha Blackwell. Cathy Hernandez is a Youth member

Guests: Yvonne and Alberto Hernandez

Approval of Minutes: Sarah Metsa moved to approve the minutes of the September 27, 2022, General Meeting as published in the October 2022 BBG. Steve Blyskal seconded the motion and it passed.

## COMMITTEE/SECTION REPORTS

Please look for reports of future Section meetings and programs in the BBG calendar, on the Website <https://hgms.org/events>, or by reading the weekly e-blast from Houston Gem and Mineral Society. If you are a member and not on our email list, please contact the Publicity Chair at [News@hgms.org](mailto:News@hgms.org), using the Subject Line: "New Member to be added." President English invited other Section Chairs and Standing Committee Chairs to make any additional announcements.

Membership Committee: Beverly Mace explained that any new members who join now cover dues for the remainder of this year and all of 2023.

Donations, Sales, Auction Committee (DSAC): Michele Marsal: The two 18' saws sold. The Frantom machine is being sold in an online auction which ends on Sunday, October 30.

Education Committee: Maggie Manley-Santa's Workshop

HGMS is offering a Santa's Workshop Day on Sunday, December 4th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the HGMS Clubhouse. Participants will leave with projects that are suitable for gifting and information about HGMS and what we have to offer. Currently, we have fourteen sessions comprised of seven different projects planned. Costs will range from free to \$50.00. These are short-term, beginner to intermediate-level classes. All of the classes being offered were published in the eBlast. Registration is available on the HGMS website and is required to attend.

Safety/Policy Committee: Nancy English/Michele Marsel

Show Committee: Scott Singleton/Sigrid Stewart

Nancy English said we need volunteers for all of the Friday shifts and most of Sunday. It is better that members sell tickets. She stated that we have had a wonderful response from the Humble and Kingswood National Honor Society and they have filled all available time slots on Saturday morning but we need volunteers for many other time slots.

Tickets: Show tickets will be available for purchase online on the HGMS website for both HGMS members and the general public. The link to buy tickets is on the Annual Show page (<https://hgms.org/annual-show/>.)

Members can purchase at a two dollar discount by entering the discount code "2OFF".

Web Site Committee: Scott Singleton/Sigrid Stewart  
Purchase of member tickets previously covered.

## OLD BUSINESS

President English asked members to look for the progress of Old Business items in the Board of Directors Meeting Minutes in the latest BackBenders Gazette (BBG) on the HGMS Website <https://hgms.org> under Publications.

Slate of officers for 2023. President English states: "I regret that we did not have any volunteers for the Nominations Committee. And we did not have any volunteers for the elected officer positions that need to be filled in 2023. At this time our slate of officers for 2023 consists of Nancy English—President and Beverly Mace—2nd Vice President. We still need a 1st Vice President to solicit speakers for the General Meetings. We are looking for a new Treasurer or a Board representative to report the financials that are produced by the Bookkeeper. Most importantly, we need a Secretary. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact Nancy English."

## NEW BUSINESS

Bylaws: Motion passed by the BOD to change the Bylaws. Because of the pending change in the number of board members the By Laws need to be changed so club business can continue in January.

Nancy read from the Bylaws (which were distributed in the recent eBlast) and explained that the Board of Directors will not be able to reach a quorum to vote on any business without a change to the current bylaws. After the October Board of Directors meeting, a proposal was made to change the wording of the bylaws that will allow the Board to continue to function. The current wording would change to allow the president to vote and that "A quorum is defined as ½ the number of voting Board Members rounded up to the nearest odd number to avoid tied votes".

Our current bylaws state the following:

### ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### Section 2 - Meetings

The Board chooses the time, place, and format (in person or virtual) to meet. Seven Board members constitute a quorum. Meetings may be held at the call of the President or at the request of any Board member.

All business coming before the Board will be decided by a majority vote of the Board members present if there is a quorum. The President will only cast a vote in the event of a tie. Only the Board members have the right to vote at a Board meeting. Proxy voting will not be allowed. Special Meetings and voting via email will be allowed when pressing business decisions are required outside of normally scheduled Board Meetings. Special email meetings and votes will be subject to the same quorum and voting rules as regular Board Meetings.

If we are not able to elect a new 1st VP, Treasurer, and Secretary for 2023, the Board will only have 7 voting members (because Nancy English only votes to break a tie), and if even one person misses a Board meeting no votes can be held. The definition of a Board quorum needs to be updated to avoid possible inability to hold votes for next year.

Robert's Rules of Order states that small boards such as ours may allow the President to vote and I think we should change that. Additionally, we need to redefine what constitutes a quorum in a way that avoids ties and is flexible to adjust the number of Board members.

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On October 17,

Via email Michele Marsel moved that the HGMS Bylaws be amended as follows:

#### ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

##### Section 2 - Meetings

The Board chooses the time, place, and format (in person or virtual) to meet. A Quorum is defined as 1/2 the number of voting Board Members rounded up to the nearest odd number to avoid tied votes. Meetings may be held at the call of the President or at the request of any Board member.

All business coming before the Board will be decided by a majority vote of the Board members present if there is a quorum. Only the Board members have the right to vote at a Board meeting. Proxy voting will not be allowed. Special Meetings and voting via email will be allowed when pressing business decisions are required outside of normally scheduled Board Meetings. Special email meetings and votes will be subject to the same quorum and voting rules as regular Board Meetings.

Example of how the quorum will function:

- If we don't fill the 1st VP and Treasurer positions, then there will be 9 voting Board members including the President. 1/2 that number is 4.5 which would be rounded up to equal a quorum of 5
- If we fill all positions and have 11 voting Board Members, 1/2 that number is 5.5 and that would round up to a quorum of 7 (must be an odd number).

Fred Brueckner seconded the motion and a quorum of the Board of Directors voted to approve it. The motion was posted in the October 23 eblast. That date fulfills the requirement of the 30 day notice to members. The membership available at the November General Meeting will be asked to approve the change to the By Laws.

SCFMS (South Central Federation of Mineral Societies) and AFMS (American Federation of Mineral Societies) awards: Ray Kizer attended the annual SCFMS and AFMS Convention held in New Orleans. He attended the conference and picked up awards for various articles published in the BBG. There were several awards for Sigrid including 1st place for being the new editor. She also received 3 awards for articles and poetry including first, third, and sixth place. In the AFMS she won third place for the BBG. Other recipients of awards included Neal Immega, Steve Blyskal and Ed Clay.

President English asked for any further New Business.

The next Board of Directors Zoom meeting will be on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at 7:30 p.m.

The next Hybrid General Meeting will be on Tuesday, November 22, 2022, at 7:30 p.m. Sigrid will be speaking about her trip to Hawaii Volcanoes National Park in.

Show-n-Tell: Nancy asked for presenters to limit items to 3

Steve Blyskal showed several amethysts (geode and plate) that he picked up from Angels' Minerals and Fossils. He also brought pieces of Prehnite with epidote from a skarn in Sinaloa, Mexico, an new location for that mineral.

James Work was given a pen set by Nancy which he returned with an agate etched with the club's logo. Thanks to James for a beautiful job.

Drawing: Sarah Metsa won the agate door prize.

Before we adjourn:

Refreshments were provided by Sharon Halton. Foster Kneeland will provide refreshments for the November meeting.

On your way out tonight, Thank the volunteers who made tonight possible.

Thank all the volunteers who make all of what HGMS is available.

Adjourn: Sharon Halton moved to adjourn. Sarah Metsa seconded it and the meeting adjourned. Adjourned at 9:03 p.m.



*Copyright Steve Blyskal 2022*

*Prehnite and Epidote, Sinaloa, Mexico*

## UPCOMING SHOWS

10/1/2022 - 10/2/2022

Central Arkansas Gem, Mineral, and Geology Society Annual show  
Saturday 9:00-6:00 – Sunday 10:00-5:00  
Cabot Event Center, 508 North Lincoln St, Cabot Arkansas  
Email: [lenoramur@aol.com](mailto:lenoramur@aol.com); Website: [centralarrockhound.org](http://centralarrockhound.org)

10/08/2022 - 10/09/2022

Cowtown Gem, Mineral, & Glass Annual show  
Saturday 10:00 - 5:00, Sunday 10:00 - 4:00  
CERA, 3300 Bryant Irvin Rd; ; Free admission & parking  
Contact Steve Shearin; Email: [steve.l.shearin@lmco.com](mailto:steve.l.shearin@lmco.com)

10/08/2022 - 10/09/2022

Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society Show  
Frank W. Mayborn Civic & Convention Center, 3301 N Third Street, Temple, TX  
Tri-City Gem & Mineral Society  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/194934397585497/>  
Contact Susan Lovelace, (619) 987-1140 or Email: [selovelace@showdirection.com](mailto:slovelace@showdirection.com)

10/14/2022 - 10/16/2022

50th Annual Gem & Mineral Show  
Friday and Saturday 10:00-6:00, Sunday 10:00-4:00  
Alario Center, 2000 Segnette Blvd, Westwego, LA 70094  
Gem and Mineral Society of Louisiana  
<https://www.gmsola.org/>

10/21/2022 - 10/23/2022

Austin Gem & Mineral Show  
Friday and Saturday 9:00-6:00, Sunday 10:00-5:00  
Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Rd, Austin, TX 78704  
Austin Gem & Mineral Society  
<http://www.agms-tx.org/>

11/05/2022 - 11/06/2022

Golden Spread Gem Mineral & Treasure Show  
Saturday 9:00-5:00, Sunday 9:00-5:00  
Amarillo Civic Center Complex, 401 S Buchanan St, Amarillo, TX 79108  
Golden Spread Gem Mineral & Treasure Society  
<http://www.amarillotreasure.com/>

11/11/2022 - 11/13/2022

HGMS Annual Gem, Mineral, Jewelry & Fossil Show  
Friday and Saturday 9:00-6:00, Sunday 10:00-5:00  
Humble Civic Center, 8233 Will Clayton Parkway, Humble, TX 77338  
Houston Gem & Mineral Society  
<https://hgms.org/>

11/19/2022 - 11/20/2022

Dallas Gem & Mineral Annual Fundraiser - 11/19/2022

Saturday 10:00-6:00, Sunday 10:00-5:00

Mesquite Convention Center, 1700 Rodeo Dr, Mesquite TX 75149

Dallas Gem & Mineral Society

<http://www.dallasgemandmineral.org/>

12/02/22 - 12/04/22

Dallas Christmas Bead & Jewelry Show

Grapevine Convention Center, 1210 S. Main St, Grapevine, Texas 76051

01/20/23 - 01/22/23

East Texas Gem & Mineral Society Show

Tyler Rose Garden Center, 420 Rose Park Drive, Tyler, Texas 75702

Shows Around the US - Dates ([rockngem.com](http://rockngem.com))

Always verify show times before traveling!