Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club of Dallas, TX
Chips and Chatter

Member: South Central Federation of Mineral Societies

Affiliated: American Federation of Mineralogical Societies

April 2026
Vol. 60, Issue 4

1st Place, 2022 SCFMS Mini-Bulletin
1st Place, 2022 AFMS Mini-Bulletin

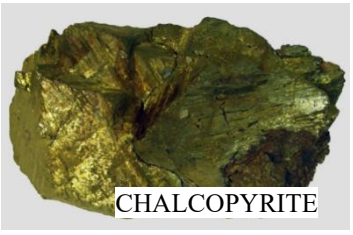
Rocks and Minerals for April

Don Shurtz, Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club

Last April, rather than writing about April's Birthstone (diamond), I wrote about rocks and minerals that celebrate April Fool's Day – rocks and minerals that can fool you. This year, I will continue to present more rocks and minerals that can fool you, and I will add a mineral appropriate for Easter.

Have you ever seen a finished piece or a slab of Chrome Jade? Until a few months ago, I did not know that Chrome Jade even existed. Identified in 1963 by Edward Gubelin, a Swiss gemologist, it was named for the city in Northern Burma near where it was found, Maw Sit Sit. It is not a mineral; it is a rock composed of kosmochlor, chromium-enriched jadeite, and albite feldspar. Other minerals often found in Maw Sit Sit include chromite, chromiferous arfvedsonite amphibole, and symplectite. The brilliant green color is attributed to the mineral kosmochlor and the chromium-enriched jadeite. It has a Mohs hardness of 6-7; it would be suitable for jewelry. Maw Sit Sit is also known as albite-jade and, more recently, as Chrome-Jade.

One of the most appropriate rocks for April Fool's Day would have to be fool's gold. The big question – which fool's gold? Probably the most common fool's gold is pyrite. Pyrite has the right color and is dense. A quick test can tell you if you have gold or fool's gold – give it a strong bite. If you can make a dent in the nugget, there is a good chance that it is gold. Gold is quite malleable. On the other hand, if you break your tooth while trying the bite test, the odds are that it is pyrite. Another fool's gold is chalcopyrite. Chalcopyrite ($CuFeS_2$) is closely related to pyrite (FeS_2), both being dense and having a bright, brassy yellow color. The bite test can also be used to distinguish gold from chalcopyrite. However, even better than the bite test, it is better to just take a small piece of the gold and fool's gold and try to hammer it. Gold will flatten out quite nicely, forming a thin sheet. Pyrite and chalcopyrite would break apart into small chunks. Yet another fool's gold is mica. When the mica is powdered or in very small flakes. It can be confused with small flakes or grains of gold. However, as soon as you start to "pan" the material, it will become obvious. The gold is dense and will stay near the middle of the pan, while the mica will wash over the edge quickly.



CHALCOPYRITE

PYRITE

GOLD

Speaking of fool's gold, how about all the fake minerals and lab-grown minerals? The lab-grown minerals may be the hardest to distinguish from natural ones. They have the same chemical properties as the natural stone. The crystalline structure is identical too. One of the best tests is if the stone looks too good, it may be fake. Natural minerals often have inclusions, but it is next to impossible to introduce inclusions into a lab-grown gem. Sometimes stress marks can help identify lab-grown minerals. The safest way to ensure a stone is natural is to have it tested by a laboratory. Then there is the issue of whether the stone has been "treated." Take citrine as an example. Natural citrine is quite rare. The majority of citrine on the market is actually heat-treated amethyst. Heat-treating amethyst to create citrine is so common that heat-treated amethyst can now be marketed as citrine without needing to disclose that it has been heat-treated. Topaz is another mineral that is often treated. Would you rather have a grayish-looking topaz or one that is clearly blue? Yet the majority of blue topaz on the market has been heat-treated to enhance the color. Again, it is so common that it is accepted that all blue topaz has been heat-treated. Virtually all tanzanite is also heat-treated to turn it into a dark blue and/or deep purple stone. A natural grass fire led to the discovery that the brownish-red and blue tanzanite could become a highly desired dark blue stone. If you want a natural tanzanite, you will likely need to visit a museum to see one.


HEAT TREATED AMETHYST


NATURAL CITRINE

Let us not forget, April is also the most common month for Easter (it can range from March 22 to April 25). One of the items I think about at Easter is the rainbow of pastel colors. My favorite blue pastel-colored mineral is Shattuckite, a nice, opaque blue color. The mineral grows from a central point into a globular structure with many fine needles forming the globe. If you look at the globe from the outside, it appears as a lumpy type of globe with many small bumps. However, if you cut the globe, the needle structure is absolutely fabulous. The fan of needles forms a really interesting cabochon. However, with a Mohs hardness of only 3.5, it is only marginally suitable for jewelry. It would need to be well protected in its mount; care would have to be taken to keep it from being scratched.


SHATTUCKITE

References:

- Maw Sit Sit: Lapidry Tips, by Admin (https:www.rockngem.com/author/adminrockngem/), story byBen Kaniuth,
- Maw Sit Sit, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maw_sit_sit

Pictures:

- Maw Sit Sit by James St. John - CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org
- Pyrite by Uoaei1, CC 4.0 International, https://commons.wikimedia.org
- Chalcopyrite by VikSl, CC 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org
- Heat-treated amethyst by Raimond Spekking, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org
- Natural Citrine, picture by Parent Géry, released to the public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org
- Gold Nugget by James St. John - CC 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org
- Shattuckite by Don Shurtz of a specimen displayed at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science

FEDERATION NEWS

SCFMS President's Message

By Sigrid Stewart, from the March-April SCFMS Newsletter

For rockhounds, almost nothing beats arriving in a new location, armed with buckets and collecting tools, ready to find out what the area offers! Even if you are an experienced collector with a garage full of great finds, it almost doesn't matter what or where, because you are outside collecting rocks! It's like the first day of school, the first day of skiing, or the first day back to the beach after a long winter. We are talking about JOY!

Finding locations for field trips is becoming more difficult for many clubs. It is a huge problem in Texas, where I live, because there is so little public land. There are liability issues and past abuses to deal with. Owners of locations on private land are under no obligation to host you and your club members, and some have bad memories of folks who left holes unfilled, gates unclosed, and trash on their land. We need to improve the public perception of rockhounds by behaving like we want people to act in our own homes and yards.

On public lands, there may be regulations to contend with. Laws prohibiting the collecting of vertebrate fossils have had rangers with binoculars scanning for commercial and individual collectors hoping to score a piece of dino bone. Sharks' teeth, which can be found in many areas, are also vertebrate fossils, and hunters have had policemen ask to see if they have collected any.

Problems like these can only be overcome with local expertise. No one wants to go rock hunting and risk a vehicle impoundment or seizure (which has happened on some federal land), and it is local people who have "sussed out" the local rules and regulations and researched the risks. If you can find private landowners willing to permit rockhounding, SCFMS can help with liability insurance for the landowner for field trips.

Back to local… what we need is more field trips! I can't think of anything more likely to attract new members to our clubs, and which would also be fun for existing members. To promote this, some members of the Austin Club suggested that each member club sponsor a trip once a year to which they would be willing to invite other SCFMS clubs' members. We could post general details (not precise locations and times) about those trips on the SCFMS website, and schedule at appropriate times to increase the number of field trips available to our members. I know the answer for the Houston Gem & Mineral Society. It would be Whiskey Bridge, on the Brazos River, not too far from Houston. That site has its own problems: steep muddy trails, occasional high water, reptiles, and mosquitoes. But this is a place where you can find Eocene fossils. Certainly, many fossil hunters already know about this site, but it's fun to go on field trips with friends, and good to have activities for new rockhounds, young and old. What trips could your club sponsor?

Shows and Activities – Upcoming Show and Activity Dates

Check with show contact to verify show status

April 11-12, San Antonio, TX, Southwest Gem and Mineral Society, Morris Center at Joe Freeman Coliseum,
https://www.facebook.com/p/SouthWest-Gem-and-Mineral-Society-100047676924297/
April 10-12,, Dallas, TX, International Gem and Jewelry Show, Market Hall,
April 17-19,Alpine, TX, Chihuahuan Desert Gem & Mineral Show, Alpine Civic Center, Rockofalpine@gmail.com, https://www.intergem.com/
May 15-17, Plano, TX, Texas Mineral & Fossil Dall/Plano Show, Plano Event Center, https://www.rmgmpromotions.com

BENCH TIPS from BRAD SMITH

Received by email from Brad Smith, used with permission

BEZEL PROBLEMS

When bezel setting a cab that has rather sharp corners, have you ever had problems pushing the metal down at the corners? It's a common problem often causing a wrinkle in your bezel and a grimace on your face.

In order for a bezel to capture the stone, the top edge of the bezel must be compressed and become shorter to lay down onto the stone. With a round or oval stone, this naturally happens as you push and burnish the bezel. But when setting a stone with corners, the tendency is to push the long sides of the bezel down first. No compression occurs along the sides, and all excess metal is left at the corners. Compressing everything there is difficult. Often, the only way to remove the extra metal at the corner is to make a saw cut and fold the two sides in to touch.

If you want a smooth bezel all around the corners, the simple solution is to set the corners of the bezel first. Then push in and burnish the sides. In this way, the necessary compression is distributed along the length of all sides and not forced to occur at the corners. With the corners set first, the top edge of the bezel can easily be compressed along the sides.

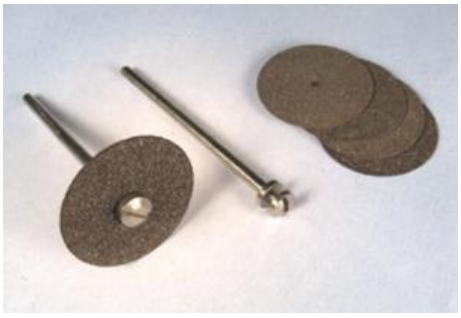
CHEAPER & BETTER PICKLE

Most jewelers use a granular pickle mixed with water. The active ingredient is sodium bisulfate. This can be purchased online (amazon.com/dp/B084GPS6KR) or from local stores as a common pool chemical like pH Down, used for adjusting the acidity of the water. Check the list of active ingredients for a brand that is 95% or more sodium bisulfate.

An added benefit is that the pool chemical is usually more pure in form than what is sold for jewelry use and does not cause the brown grime often found floating on the top of the pot.

CUTOFF WHEELS

Cutoff wheels (also called Separating Discs) are inexpensive and do a great job cutting or shaping steel. You can use them to sharpen tool points, cut piano wire to length, make slots, and sharpen worn drills. Other uses include modifying pliers and making your own design stamps.



My preference is the one-inch diameter size. Be sure to hold the wheel firmly so nothing moves to break the disc, and definitely wear your safety glasses. Those are little flakes of steel coming off the disk.

BTW - Cutoff wheels are not as good at cutting soft metals like copper, silver, and gold. They will work, but soft metals tend to clog up the cutting edges.

See More of my Smart Solutions for Jewelry Making at
http://amazon.com/dp/B0BQ8YVLTJ

OFFICERS FOR 2025 – 2026

President:	Joe Vulk
1st VP, Programs:	Amy Vulk
2nd VP, Field Trips:	Julie Wilson
Secretary:	Johnny Rhodes
Treasurer	Ling Shurtz
Editor	Don Shurtz

Contact us by email: don.shurtz@gmail.com

Minutes of the March 2, 2026 Meeting

Our March 2nd meeting was our annual St. Patrick's Day potluck dinner. Food and talk were the order of the day. There was no club business conducted; no minutes were required. By the way, we still had the club raffle to end the meeting.

Presentation Review

The presentation for the March meeting was the potluck dinner. There was corned beef and cabbage, potatoes, soda bread, dessert cakes, ice cream, a selection of drinks, and more! We even had appetizers in the form of Egg Rolls. Granted, Egg Roles were not very Irish, but they were delicious. Let us be thankful that Choice, despite his young age, likes Egg Rolls so much – they are his favorite food!

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be Monday, April 6, 2026. Our meeting will start at 6:00 pm and end by 8:00 pm. We will meet at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 3722 Cavalier Drive, Garland, TX. I have not received any input on the meeting's presentation, but I do remember that, at our potluck dinner, there was some discussion of a club field trip. Perhaps that will be discussed. However, I will also bring along the club's projector system for viewing a movie or video clips.

Editor's Corner

The Chips and Chatter would be much easier to create each month with a bit more support from the club members. As it is, I struggle each month to find a new topic to write about. How many times can you write about Birthstones? I'm sure there are some interesting stories our members could share with us. Warner's trip to Pakistan, or Warner and Julie discussing the shows they participate in, would be interesting and may inspire one of us to give it a try. I dream about going to Australia to do a little rockhounding. Perhaps Amy could share some of her experiences of Australia, even if they were not about rocks or minerals. Carolyn and Carole could probably tell us about club activities from our history. If writing a story seems too daunting, how about just some photographs with titles – remember that each image is worth 10,000 words. Then there is the junior perspective about rockhounding and trips. 20 years ago, Katherine and Jessica (my daughters) would share something to be published – a story, poem, anything! It would be great if Choice could let us know about the trips he is taking with his father. He sometimes will share them at a meeting, but reading about them would be even better – to share them with a larger community of rockhounds.

VISIT AN AREA CLUB

Arlington Gem & Mineral Club, meets the 1st Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm, 1408 Gibbins, Arlington, TX
Cowtown Gem, Mineral, & Glass Club, meets the 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 pm, CERA 3300 Bryant Irvin Rd. Fort Worth
Dallas Bead Society, meets 1st Saturday of each month at 10:00 am at The Point at CC Young, 4847 W. Lawther Dr., Dallas, TX
Dallas Gem & Mineral Society meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7 pm, American Legion, 10205 Plano Rd, Dallas (next to their shop)
Dallas Paleontological Society, meets the 2nd Wed. of each month at 7:00 pm, Brookhaven College, Building H, 3939 Valley View Lane,
Fort Worth Gem & Mineral Club, meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm, UNT Health Center, 3500 Camp Bowie, Blvd,
Carl E. Everett Education and Administration Bldg, Room 255, Ft. Worth. Free parking off Clifton Street, Lot #6, Ft. Worth
Oak Cliff Gem & Min Soc., meets the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm, Unitarian Universalist Church, 3839 W. Keist Blvd, Dallas,
Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club, meets the 1st Monday of each month at 7:00 pm, Knights of Columbus Hall, 3722 Cavalier Dr., Garland, 7
Wild West Bead Society, meets 3rd Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm, Wild Beads, 1124 S. Bowen Road, Arlington, TX

PLEASANT OAKS GEM and MINERAL CLUB of DALLAS

Meetings
First Thursday of each month. Please check website, www.pogmc.org, for updates.

Membership
Single Adult: $16.50,
Junior: $5.00, Family: $27.50
(Plus badge fee for new members)

PURPOSE

The Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club of Dallas is organized for charitable and educational purposes to promote interest in the various earth sciences, particularly those hobbies that involve the art of cutting and polishing gemstones, the science of gems, minerals, and metal crafts, and related fields. Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club of Dallas is a not-for-profit organization.

CHIPS AND CHATTER
Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club
c/o 4004 Dublin Rd.
Allen, TX 75002-6526

To

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME

Our next meeting: Monday, April 6, 2026, at 6:00 pm. Our meeting presentation will be a SURPRISE
We will meet at the Knights of Columbus, Council 6402 Hall, 3722 Cavalier Drive, Garland, TX 75042

Features

Federation News

Notices