

Pleasant Oaks Gem & Mineral Club of Dallas, TX

Chips and Chatter



Member: South Central Federation of Mineral Societies



February 2026
Vol. 60, Issue 1

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

A MINERAL FOR WINTER

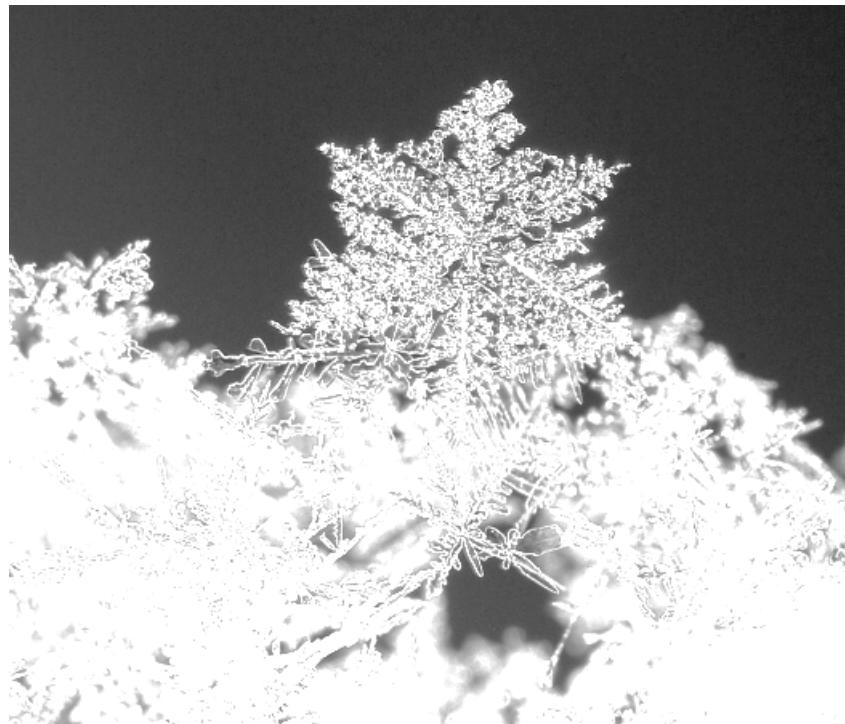
Don Shurtz, Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club

As I write this article, we are expecting an arctic front to pass through the Dallas area. Each year, in the Dallas area, we get one, two, or sometimes more ice storms associated with these arctic fronts. We dread them. Ice and packed snow accumulate on the roads. Living as far south as we do, the cities have few (if any) snow plows and limited equipment to remove Ice. Sand is used on inclines and some intersections, and in the last few years, they have started treating major roads with a brine solution before the storm hits. Generally, we just wait until the sun comes back out to melt the snow and Ice to clear our roads. Travel can be treacherous.

So, what does an ice or snow storm have to do with rockhounding in Texas? First, let's consider what a mineral is. A mineral is a naturally occurring, inorganic, solid material of a consistent chemical composition and a definitive crystalline structure. Rain is definitely not a solid; the solid form of rain (water) is Ice. Under the right conditions, Ice can form a definitive crystalline structure. It is certainly naturally occurring and has no organic material. In other words, Ice is the crystalline form of water, and it is a Mineral until it melts.

One of the most beautiful natural objects that you will ever see is a snowflake. A snowflake is a dendrite form of Ice. The angular separation of the hydrogen to oxygen bonds in a water molecule is 104.5° . With only a little distortion, water molecules can easily form a six-sided hexagon with legs separated by 120° . As the plate grows, it sinks further in the atmosphere. When the temperature and pressure reach a critical point, the hexagonal core stops growing and starts forming dendrites at its vertices. These dendrites continue to grow symmetrically as the snowflake falls through the atmosphere. It is possible to capture a single snowflake. We used to capture them on our knitted gloves. We could look at them for a few seconds before they started to melt. It is also possible to capture them on a cooled microscope slide for viewing under a microscope. I have also seen a single flake adhere to a cold, vertical window pane and remain visible for an extended period. The crystal is colorless, but diffraction of the light from the faces of the crystal causes it to appear white. The problem with Ice minerals, including snowflakes, is that they melt.

As indicated above, Ice forms in hexagonal crystals. Generally, these crystals are microscopic, but under certain conditions, they can grow into visible hexagonal crystals.



Reference: Wikipedia, various topics, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Picture: Picture by [brianjobson](#), released to Public Domain, from Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

Chips and Chatter

Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club of Dallas, TX

See the Chips and Chatter online for color!

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Winter Mineral Word Find

By Don Shurtz, Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club

P	D	L	O	E	R	A	E	S	A	N	I	T	U	O	A	J	K	S
S	R	A	I	N	O	N	O	R	G	A	N	I	C	V	N	E	A	K
A	E	Y	R	C	B	G	R	O	W	S	K	I	S	O	L	I	D	G
M	B	R	V	O	Y	H	H	M	I	N	E	R	A	L	A	B	E	L
L	M	A	Y	N	V	X	E	P	N	O	L	E	R	Q	T	H	N	E
L	E	U	R	S	Q	L	X	T	E	W	A	T	E	R	S	T	D	H
W	C	R	A	I	T	A	A	B	Z	F	R	O	N	T	Y	L	R	M
A	E	B	U	S	R	R	G	C	O	L	D	G	H	J	R	A	I	Q
D	D	E	N	T	W	U	O	R	R	A	R	C	T	I	C	C	T	A
P	D	F	A	A	P	T	N	R	F	K	F	L	W	D	B	I	E	B
F	G	K	J	N	Y	A	T	I	C	E	R	E	Y	L	O	M	P	N
O	M	M	L	T	Z	N	C	R	Y	S	T	A	L	I	N	E	U	N
B	N	Y	N	A	T	M	O	S	P	H	E	R	E	Z	D	H	I	D
U	R	T	P	Y	K	N	O	I	T	I	S	O	P	M	O	C	B	L
U	H	L	B	C	T	L	F	A	E	R	C	E	S	N	Q	I	Z	M

WORD LIST	
ARCTIC	FRONT
ATMOSPHERE	FROZEN
BOND	GROWS
CAPTURE	HEXAGONE
CHEMICAL	ICE
CLEAR	JANUARY
COLD	MELT
COMPOSITION	MINERAL
CONSISTANT	NATURAL
CRYSTAL	NONORGANIC
CRYSTALINE	RAIN
DECEMBER	SNOWFLAKE
DENDRITE	SOLID
FEBRUARY	WATER

Puzzle Directions: Fill in the word from the list (above) into the correct location on the puzzle (top). Words can be horizontal, vertical, or on an angle. All words interconnected to other words in the puzzle. Hint: none of the words have letters in the outside columns, top row, or bottom row.

Puzzle Answer on page 4 at bottom

POGMC PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope everyone had a good holiday season. Brenda and I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year. I regret missing the January meeting due to illness. I learned that it was a good meeting, and I'm still surprised there are metals in our cereals.

I have confirmed with the Knights of Columbus that we may continue using their Hall for our meetings for another year under the same terms.

As I write this (January 25, 2026), I am looking out at the beautiful snow and sleet. Brenda and I have our fingers crossed that we don't have any power loss. I vividly remember February 2021, when we were without power for 30 hours straight. The temperature inside got down into the 40s. I believe we had every blanket in the house on the bed, except when we used some to bundle up in front of the fireplace. Fortunately, we had gas there and, of course, plenty of wood. We did the best we could with some old camping pots and a coffee percolator on the fire. Here's hoping that we all survive this cold spell without incident.

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at our February meeting.

Joe Vulk

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Pleasant Oaks Gem and Mineral Club of Dallas, TX

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FEDERATION NEWS

{SCFMS} PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Sigrid Stewart, from the January-February SCFMS Newsletter



Happy New Year!

Hi, my name is Sigrid Stewart, and I'm the new President of the South Central Federation of Mineral Societies, Inc. We also have a new Executive Vice President, Rick Price. Henry Rojas remains Treasurer, and Susan Burch will return as Executive Secretary and editor of the newsletter.

I look forward to communicating with all the clubs and reaching out to former members. I hope to introduce myself to many clubs and to attend some of their shows. And I want to hear from you! Think about working with the SCFMS! We have open positions that need to be filled and much to do to revitalize our hobby. I will work with the AFMS to promote the national society and bring more of its benefits to our region.

My hope for the SCFMS is to serve as a sounding board for our district, to promote STEM and encourage young rockhounds, and to help get those kids, and adults too, out in nature to see geology and collect a few rocks of their own. A wonderful idea proposed by members at the Austin Gem and Mineral Society at the 2025 SCFMS Convention in Austin is for each club in the Federation to sponsor a field trip that other clubs' members can attend. More field trips! I can't think of a better way to attract new members.

And finally, I want to thank Don Shurtz for his vision and guidance, and his patience while I was figuring out how the SCFMS was structured. I sincerely hope to call on his advice in the future!

A Little Bit About Me

Like you, I am a rockhound. At four years of age, I started picking up interesting rocks, and my grandmother was delighted – because she was a rockhound too, collecting in the golden age of rockhounding in California, and everywhere that her children settled. Today, I have a considerable collection of found and purchased mineral treasures, including some of my grandmother's. I like to hunt for agates and petrified wood, too. I love to cut cabs. I even married a mineral collector, so our home is decorated with minerals and agates, and our flowerbeds are lined with petrified wood.

I have been a president of both the Midland Gem & Mineral Society and the Houston Gem and Mineral Society, and am currently a newsletter editor. I have been a Show Chairman and helped set up, work, and break down many shows. I have a geology degree and during my career, worked as an IT professional for an oil company, where I was surrounded by geologists and geophysicists. I think I have a lot in common with the folks in our membership.

Let's share what we know and love with our fellow rockhounds and spread a little of the joy that we find in our hobby with the world.

From the Desk of the {AFMS} President

By Ronna Watkins, from the December 2025 AFMS Newsletter

Season's Greetings from Tieton (Tie-eh-ton), Washington! So, another chapter begins for the American Federation. A lot of great things have occurred recently that may not be widely known. I hope that everyone is keeping informed and taking notice of the outstanding progress we have made together.

Before reviewing some of the highlights from the past year, I want to extend heartfelt congratulations to JC and Donna Moore. Their exemplary service as President Elect/President and Executive Secretary over two consecutive years has demonstrated an extraordinary level of dedication and leadership. Their commitment to attending regional meetings and shows has set a commendable standard, and we are grateful for their over-the-top terms. Thank you, JC and Donna, for your remarkable contributions!

Some of the recent accomplishments of the AFMS include:

- The Uniform Rules Updates: The Uniform Rules have been revised to separate the divisions for displaying. This change will make it easier for members to focus on specific areas of competition. Additionally, records of eligibility and past competitive displayers have been digitized to improve accessibility and organization.

continued on page 4

From the Desk of the {AFMS} President (continued from page 3)

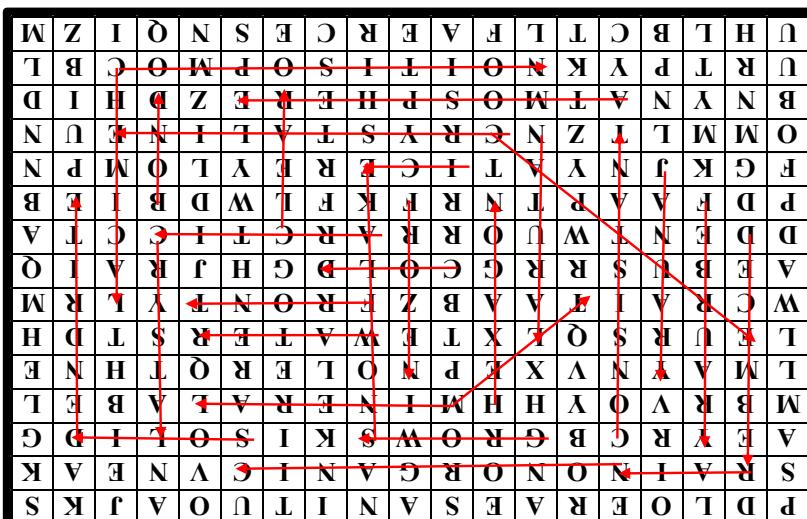
- Public Relations Initiatives: Under Jim Brace-Thompson's leadership, the Public Relations Chair has become active. He developed the "How to Display" PowerPoint presentation and has written extensively on ways clubs can increase publicity and build membership. Jim is also facilitating internet meetings to connect clubs and foster discussions about effective public relations practices.
- Juniors Committee Programs: Guided by Lora Hall, the Juniors Committee continues to meet and innovate. They have launched a new sand-collecting program and designed a "Rock Star" pin. They have also updated the "Junior Rockhound Badge". Joan Stoker and her husband have represented the AFMS Junior Rockhound Merit Badge Program at shows in Billings, MT, and Hickory, NC, engaging families with games and distributing rocks and fossils.
- At the Hickory show, the committee hosted an impressive meeting featuring a "sand badge" activity, an earth processes food activity, and promotional displays for club Juniors programs, created by the California group led by Jim Brace-Thompson. This was, in my experience, the best Junior Cracker Barrel yet. Congratulations to everyone who contributed to this successful event.
- Plans for another exciting meeting are already in the works for our next convention in St. Charles, IL.

These achievements are just a sampling of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies' ongoing commitment to the rockhound community. There is much more on the horizon!

Now, in closing, for those who may not know me. I joined the Yakima Rock & Mineral Club in Central Washington State many years ago. My journey into the world of rocks and minerals is relatively recent compared to many of you, as I did not grow up in a rock club, nor were my parents rockhounds. My interest developed alongside my husband, Darrell, who grew up in The Dalles, Oregon, near the Columbia River. Darrell collected along the river and frequented the Old Hwy 50-95 Rock Shop in Biggs Junction, Oregon. He witnessed the arrival of Famous Biggs Jasper and became a passionate collector of picture jaspers. Inspired by him, I began collecting marine fossils, and our two youngest sons started competitive displaying early on—one specializing in fossils, the other in petrified wood. Our family has led a successful Juniors' program for over a decade, and I continue to lead it today. My service to the Northwest Federation includes roles as BEAC, Juniors, and Slide/Video Librarian Chair, as well as holding the office of President.

Outside of rockhounding, I work in front office operations and data entry for Independent Water Services, an Eco Water Dealership in Yakima, WA. Additionally, I teach classes on safe essential oil use and share wellness practices as a hobby. Traveling is another passion of mine, and I recently returned from a well-run and well-attended NFMS Show and Convention hosted by the Marcus Whitman Gem & Mineral Club in Walla Walla, WA. Congratulations to Sam Carlson, Janel Lacey, Warren Rood, Dennis English, and Sydnee Morehouse! I am excited to visit each Region during my term and remain committed to ensuring our hobby continues to thrive and grow. Next, I will be heading to Missoula, MT, for the NFMS Annual Convention from March 20–22. I invite you to join me as we continue to celebrate and advance our shared interests in rockhounding.

Puzzle Answer (see page 2)



Shows and Activities – Upcoming Show and Activity Dates

Check with show contact to verify show status

Feb 7-9, Tyler TX, Stone Crystal Show, Rose Garden Center, Email: keithharmon19@gmail.com

Feb 14-15, Georgetown, TX, Williamson County G&MS Show, Georgetown Community Center, Website: wgcms.org

Feb 28-Mar 2, Pasadena, TX, Clear Lake G&MS Show, Pasadena Convention Center, Email: <https://www.clgms.org/>

OFFICERS FOR 2025 – 2026

President:	Joe Vulk
1st VP, Programs:	Amy Vulk
2 nd 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 January 5, 2025 Meeting

Call to Order: Don Shurtz called the January 5, 2026, POGMC meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Snack and Start of the Presentation: Thanks to those members who brought snacks. The presentation for this evening was to mine Iron from our breakfast cereal. We used a blender to "crush" our ore and to thoroughly mix it with water. The ore slurry was placed in a plastic bag. It needed to sit for about 45 minutes to allow the Iron to settle to the bottom of the ore slurry, so we proceeded to the business meeting.

Pledge of Allegiance: Amy led the Pledge of Allegiance

Quorum: A quorum was present.

Visitors: Puneet Jagralapudi and Fei Gao, along with their children, Olivia and Adam, attended our meeting.

Minutes: The Minutes of the November meeting were published in the December Chips and Chatter. Julie made a motion to accept the Minutes as published. Warner seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of members present.

Treasurer's Report: There were no financial transactions in December. The Treasurer's Report was deferred until our February meeting.

Old Business:

- Please pay dues if you haven't yet.
- Don asked if anyone needed reimbursement for club expenses for the December Dinner. Amy and Ling declined reimbursement. Carolyn will be contacted to determine whether she requires reimbursement.

- Reports: Dallas InterGem on Jan 3-4. Pleasant Oaks did not participate

New Business:

- Joe will meet with the Knights of Columbus Hall officers to determine if the Hall will be available this year and if the rent will increase.
- On Nov. 25, several members picked up an extensive collection of items donated by the Sharon Greer family of Farmers Branch. Among the items donated were a complete vacuum casting machine, lapidary tools, and several hundred pounds of rocks, including rough and finished lapidary and faceting supplies. One of the tools was a faceting head – useful if someone wants to build a flat lap to go with it.

Raffle: We held the raffle. Everyone got a nice item.

Presentation (continued): It was finally time to separate the ore from the ore-slurry mixture. We used powerful Neodymium magnets to drag the Iron to the bottom of the slurry bag. The Iron could be seen as a dark mass that followed the magnet as it was moved over the plastic bag. As a further check to see if there really was Iron in our cereal, several cereal flakes or pieces were carefully floated on a plate of water. The magnets were then used to see if the cereal could be moved. The Cheerios circles and the other cereal flakes could be easily pulled through the water. We were surprised when a Rice Check square was floated, but it was repelled by the magnet. It didn't matter which face of the square or pole of the magnet was used. The Rice Check square moved away from the magnet!

Adjourn: Don adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

NEXT MEETING

Our next meeting will be Monday, February 2, 2026. Our meeting will start at 6:00 PM and is expected to conclude by 8:00 PM. We will meet at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 3722 Cavalier Drive, Garland, TX. The presentation may include snowflakes (cut from paper or viewing videos about snowflake formation).

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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 7:30 pm, 3545 Bryan Avenue, 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, TX

[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, February 2, 2026, at 6:00 PM

We will meet at the Knights of Columbus, Council 6402 Hall, 3722 Cavalier Drive, Garland, TX 75042

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