



PRESS RELEASE
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AGTA & JA to Add Spinel as an Official Birthstone for August

The revised birthstone list will launch to consumers later this summer

New York, NY – The American Gem Trade Association (AGTA), the authoritative source on natural colored gemstones, and Jewelers of America (JA), the national trade association for businesses serving the fine jewelry marketplace, have announced that spinel will join the official list of birthstones as an additional gemstone for the month of August. The new birthstone will launch to consumers in July, through a public relations and marketing campaign led by JA, which established the modern birthstone list in 1912.

“At certain moments in history, when there is a strong call from gem enthusiasts to expand the list of official birthstones, Jewelers of America believes in recognizing the importance of historically significant gemstones and giving gemstone lovers a choice that suites their preferences,” says JA President & CEO David J. Bonaparte. “Spinel is a welcome addition to August’s peridot birthstone, sure to be embraced by both jewelers and the jewelry consuming public.”

“Ancient gemstone merchants revered spinel, and it was widely sought after by royalty. It was then known as ‘Balas Ruby,’” says AGTA CEO Douglas Hucker. “It wasn’t until the late 18th century that we developed the technology acumen necessary to distinguish spinel as a separate mineral from ruby. We are very excited to announce it as the newest member of the official birthstone list.”

Two notable examples of spinel’s historical significance include a 170-carat red spinel, known as the famed “Black Prince Ruby,” that graces the Imperial State Crown in the British Crown Jewels; and a 398-carat red spinel – considered the largest ever found – atop the Imperial Crown of Russia, commissioned by Catherine the Great in 1763.

“Spinel is an incredible gemstone that has garnered respect for centuries, and it is enjoying surging popularity because of its stunning range of colors,” remarks AGTA President Jeffrey Bilgore.

“Birthstones have their roots far back in recorded history, strongly influenced by biblical teaching and related to the 12 stones in the breast plate of Aaron as well as the lunar calendar,” explains Hucker.

This is the third update to modern birthstone list since it was officially created in 1912 by the American National Retail Jewelers Association, now known as Jewelers of America. It was updated in 1952, adding alexandrite, citrine, tourmaline and zircon as birthstones, and again in 2002, when Tanzanite was made an additional December birthstone.

For more information on the promotional opportunities related to spinel’s public launch as a new August birthstone, check Jewelers of America’s website at www.jewelers.org/ja in the coming months.

For more information, contact AGTA at 800-972-1162 and info@agta.org, or contact Jewelers of America at 800-223-0673 and members@jewelers.org. Additional information on spinel can be obtained at <http://agta.org/gemstones/variation-spinel.html>. For the official list of birthstones, visit <http://www.jewelers.org/gift-guides/birthstone-jewelry-guide>.