



## February Birthstone: The Luxury of Rich Purple Amethyst

When you think of February Birthstones, the deep rich color of amethyst comes to mind and conjures thoughts of royalty. The British crown jewels feature gorgeous amethysts and the gem was said to be the favorite of Russia's Catherine the Great.

Amethyst was popular during the Middle Ages and worn by Christian clergy. This is why the mineral has been referred to as the Bishop's Stone. The gem also adorned crosses and many other religious items. Folk lore says that Saint Valentine wore an amethyst ring engraved with the image of Cupid.

This semi-precious stone with the look of luxury has been treasured back to ancient times. The name amethyst comes from the Greek word "amethystos", meaning sober. The ancient Greeks felt the stone would protect the wearer from becoming drunk or intoxicated. For this reason, some refer to amethyst as the sobriety stone and claim it helps with recovering from addiction.

es back even further. Discovered in archeological digs in France, Neolithic man adorned his tools and decorative pieces with the stone. Being part of the quartz family, the second most abundant mineral found on earth, could explain the gem's early popularity. It was so very easy to find.

Properties attributed to the February birthstone include promoting peace, temperance, and serenity. Amethyst is said to have a protective quality, can help focus the mind during meditation, improves intuition and builds spiritual wisdom. Whatever the reason you choose to wear the February birthstone, you are certain to enjoy the magnificence of this richly-colored purple mineral.

Today, February's birthstone comes in a range of purple shades including the very pale Rose de France which has become very popular. Amethyst looks fabulous in any metal setting, including silver, yellow or white gold and especially in the trendy rose gold. A lot of Victorian jewelry featured amethyst, often set with seed pearls and diamond accents, creating stunning designs that are still lovely today.

When amethyst is heat-treated, it usually turns to a yellow color, becoming citrine. But some stones turn a very light shade of green which is called prasiolite. While some people refer to this relatively new gem as "green amethyst", this is actually a misnomer. Prasiolite does occur naturally as well, but that is a rare find.

Brazil is one of the most prolific sources of amethyst, but the stone is also mined in Uruguay, Africa which is known for the deep, regal purple, Siberia and even in the USA. Since the gem is so readily available, amethyst is one of the most affordable birthstones.

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## Custom Design Jewelry A Matching Band for this Art Deco Beauty

Some brides want an engagement set that is totally unique and something no one else will ever have. That's when custom jewelry design is the answer which is Aslynn's story. She and her fiancé were taking a road trip and stopping at antique stores along the way. In one quaint shop they stumbled upon this stunning vintage ring which hit the mark for the engaged couple.

"We found the ideal ring...asymmetrical, retro and everything I wanted except for one thing; no wedding band." Aslynn loves the funky art deco design in white gold. She had been to my store before and so she told me I came to immediately as a resource to create a matching band to complete her wedding set. This customer made an appointment to talk about designing the complementary band.

Standing by the counter, we talked over her ideas for the wedding band. A concern was that the new band needed to look like it was made to go with the antique engagement ring. I asked if she envisioned anything in particular.

We discussed her love of art deco design period which began in the 1920's and ended with World War II. Art Deco style is famous for combining geometric shapes with abundant embellishments and details in a symmetric pattern.

As we spoke, ideas started to flow into my designer's mind. For me, there is nothing as wonderful as being given a creative challenge like this one. I adore custom jewelry design and take a lot of pride in this as the owner of Marks of Design in Shelton, CT.

Having been a jewelry designer for many years, I picked up a pencil and started sketching out some ideas. Playing with several geometric shapes, I created a delicately curved band that reflected the intricate design details of the vintage piece. The grouping of triangles fit together snugly while nestling close to the engagement ring.

Just two weeks later, I called my Aslynn to come in. She was so pleased with her new band and felt it was the perfect match to complete the wedding set. Aslynn told me, "Now I have the wedding set of my dreams!" and she loves that there is a story behind her wedding set as well.

Goldsmith jewelers are not as common as they once were which is why I am so happy to offer these skills to my customers. For people who have had a one-of-a-kind custom jewelry design created for them, they know the deep satisfaction of owning an item no one else will ever have.

Why not schedule an appointment with me to discuss your special project and see what we can create for you? Stop in at Marks of Design in Shelton, CT or call me at 203-924-0030 to get your own unique custom design jewelry.

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## Custom Jewelry Design with Touching Personal Meaning

### Sailing Golden Seas

This intricate pendant is one of my very creative custom jewelry design pieces. The customer who commissioned the item wanted something reminiscent of her boat and incorporated several elements that all fit within a circle. The white gold, satin-finished, crescent moon watches over her sailboat with a deep blue sapphire, marquise-shaped, all-seeing eye.

The boat itself, fashioned in yellow gold has life-like, wind-filled sails, engraved with lovely detail. Sitting on a sea of yellow gold waves, the sailboat sails into the sun, represented by six bright yellow citrines in graduating sizes, snuggled into the curved outer circle of the pendant.

Talk about a labor of love, this was such an amazing piece of jewelry to work on. When it was presented to the client, she was so excited to see her vision come to be, she immediately put the piece around her neck and told me she didn't take it off for weeks. That's what makes the jewelry design center here so meaningful for me.

### Capture Your Creative Essence

Barbara came to me with a half carat round diamond wanting something that captured her work as an author. She had written a series of children's books set in Ireland and just returned from a trip to research locations and characters.

This project is a perfect example of how I apply my creativity to a custom jewelry design project. I looked into ancient pagan and hieroglyphs to create this circular treasure. You can see the circle of life created in yellow and white gold. Some of the gold twists around itself, similar to the intricate Celtic knot patterns. parts of the circle were widened to hold channel-set diamonds.

Curving into the center, the end of the circle features the custom bezel set diamond, creating a symbolic circle within a circle. Barbara, she was wearing the stunning piece, telling me about all the compliments she gets. Barbara was very pleased with the touching nature of her custom jewelry design and its unique beauty.

### Goldsmith and Bench Jeweler

Kate Marks of Marks of Design in Shelton, CT feels very lucky to be able to do this creative work for her customers. Her jewelry designs get rave reviews and she would be so happy to

Speak with you about your design needs. Call 203-924-0030 to make a private appointment for custom jewelry design or just stop by to see what she can do for you.

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