



Amber



Amber is fossil resin so it is not technically a 'gemstone'. Amber is formed when the resin of a tree is prohibited from breaking down because it is deprived of oxygen, such as being under water. For the resin to survive long enough to become Amber, it must lay dormant for more than 10 million years. Any younger and it is considered Copal.

Unlike bone fossils where minerals replace the cavity left behind during gradual decomposition, Amber is the actual resin.



Baltic Amber is considered to be the highest quality in the world. From the shores of Gdansk in Poland, divers collect Amber but it has also been known to wash ashore. It is from a pine variety of the *Sciadopityaceae* family that used to live in northern Europe, but now only remains as the Umbrella tree of Japan.



The inclusion of insects or plant material in Amber increases the value of the specimen. In ancient China it was customary to burn amber during large festivities; it gives off a characteristic 'pinewood' fragrance.