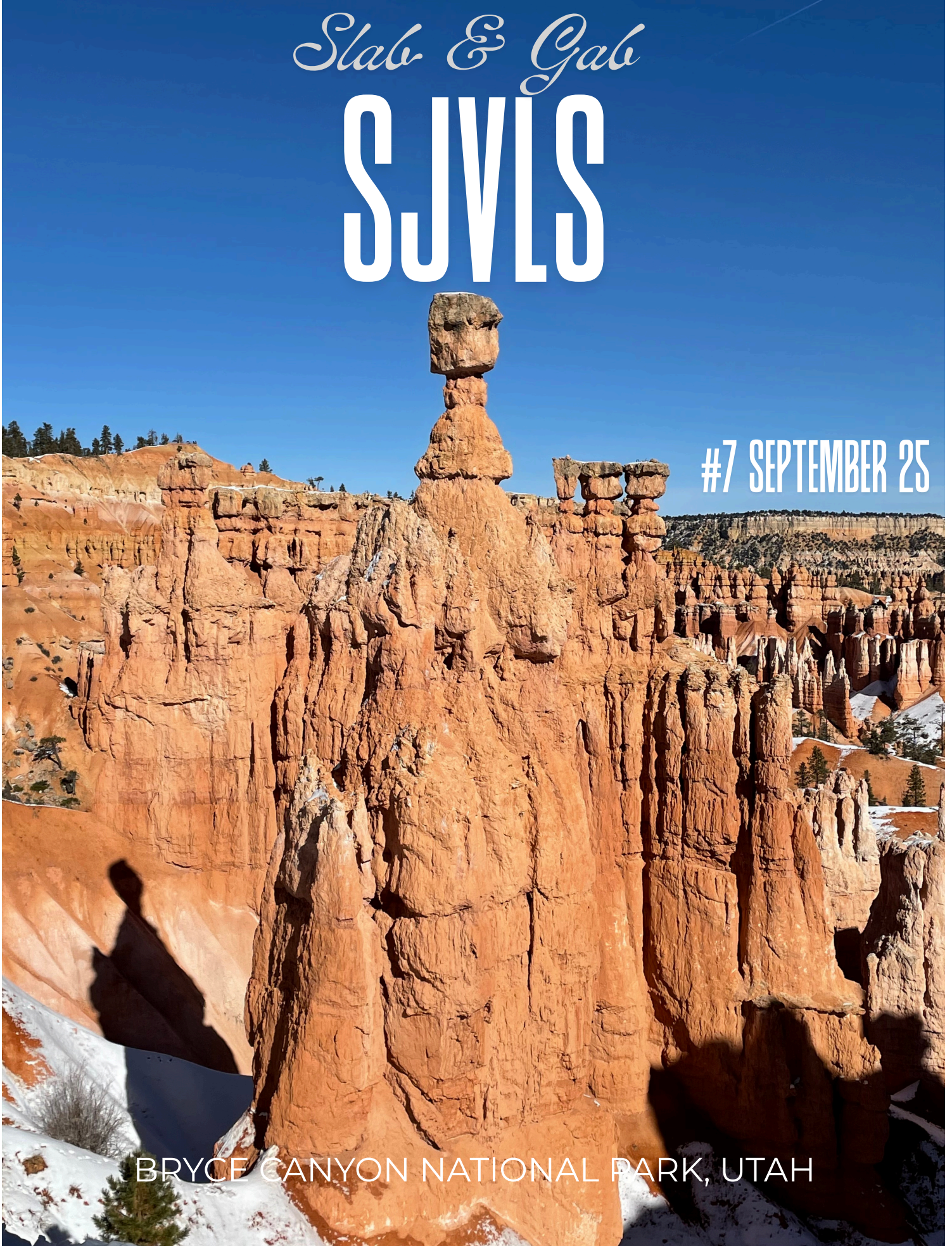


Slab & Gab

SJVL

#7 SEPTEMBER 25

BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK, UTAH





SEPTEMBER 2025

Slab and Gab

President's Message:

As the dust settles from the Kern County Fair, I want to extend my deepest thanks to each and every one of you who helped make it a success. From setting up displays, running booths, talking with guests, and sharing your love of rocks and gems with the community, you kept our club's spirit shining bright. Now we turn to clean-up, closing this chapter with the same teamwork and energy we carried through the fair itself.

But endings are only half the story. September is a bridge between seasons, and for us, it's a stepping stone toward the adventures ahead. Mid-October we'll gather under the stars for our camping trip, enjoying the outdoors together in the way only rockhounds know how. We're also working to fit in another field trip to Pisgah Crater and Lavic, where lava flows and desert winds remind us just how dynamic and ever-changing this earth truly is.

With the fair behind us, we will also refocus our energy on getting the workshop up and running. Our shop leads are working toward full training so they'll be ready to guide members safely and confidently. Silversmithing workshops will soon resume, and we'll expand into new offerings—bringing in fresh subjects and different branches of lapidary art to keep us learning, growing, and inspired.

Looking forward, our October meeting will be a time to harvest the seeds we planted during the fair. We hope to welcome new faces into the fold—friends we met at the booth who are curious about what we do, or visitors inspired by our displays. Let's open our arms and show them what it means to be part of this vibrant community.

May we carry the lessons, laughter, and connections of summer and fall into the months ahead, knowing that every turn of the season offers us another chance to grow, to discover, and to shine.

May every sign of beauty in nature and in our work be our reminder that Paradise is all around us.

With gratitude and anticipation,

Cristian Battazar

President, SJVLS

In This Newsletter:

President's Message

On The Cover: Bryce Canyon

The Most "Diamond-y" Diamond

Follow Me To Paradise

September's Stone Spotlight: Sapphire

Test Your Knowledge

Rockin' Recipes: Rock Candy

Governance Matters: How Our Nonprofit Works

Poetry Rocks

Upcoming Gem & Mineral Events



ON THE COVER

BRYCE NATIONAL PARK, UTAH

Nature's Lapidary Gallery

Bryce Canyon isn't a canyon at all—it's a sprawling natural amphitheater carved into the eastern edge of the Paunsaugunt Plateau in southern Utah. What makes it extraordinary are its hoodoos: towering red-orange spires sculpted by ice, rain, and time. To a lapidary artist, Bryce feels like the earth's own workshop, where nature herself has been cabbing, carving, and polishing on a scale beyond imagination.

How the Hoodoos Form

The rock layers of Bryce belong to the Claron Formation, composed mostly of limestone, siltstone, and dolomite. While limestone may seem ordinary, here it becomes extraordinary. Each year, water seeps into cracks. In winter, that water freezes, expands, and forces the stone apart—an ongoing freeze-thaw cycle that acts like a cosmic trim saw. Over thousands of years, this patient chiseling leaves behind slender spires, walls, and windows of stone that defy gravity. Iron oxides tint the rocks fiery red and orange, while manganese leaves purples and browns—making the whole amphitheater glow like a living gemstone.

A Cultural Lens

Long before it became a National Park in 1928, the Paiute people told stories of these formations. To them, the hoodoos were the "Legend People" who were turned to stone as a lesson to others. Where geologists see erosion, the Paiute saw transformation and meaning—reminding us that stones often carry both scientific and spiritual weight.

Visiting the Park

For those inspired to visit, Bryce Canyon offers more than geology; it's a sensory feast. Sunrise Point lives up to its name, with first light setting the hoodoos ablaze. The Navajo Loop Trail takes you down among the spires, where walls of red stone tower above like cathedral columns. At night, Bryce is recognized as a "Dark Sky Sanctuary," where the Milky Way blazes overhead—another kind of gem against the black velvet sky.

Reflection

As rockhounds, we know the thrill of uncovering beauty hidden in stone. Bryce Canyon shows us that the same processes we imitate in the workshop—cutting, polishing, shaping—are being carried out every day on the grandest of scales. What tumbler could rival wind and water? What handpiece could carve with the persistence of frost?

Bryce reminds us that patience and pressure create masterpieces. Whether a cabochon on the dop stick or a hoodoo rising from the desert floor, both teach us the same lesson: beauty takes time.

THE MOST "DIAMOND-Y" DIAMOND



Original Article By Kaleigh Begneaud | Adapted for The Slab & Gab

MURFREESBORO, ARK. — A New York woman visiting **Crater of Diamonds State Park** stumbled upon a true gem — literally. She found a **2.30-carat diamond** just before her trip ended. And in her own words, it was “**the most diamond-y diamond I had seen.**”

The visitor, who had never held a real diamond before, spotted the stone while scouring the park’s public search area. “I didn’t know for sure, but it just looked like what a diamond should look like,” she said. And she wasn’t wrong.

This dazzling find has since been verified by park staff and is officially known as the **Fox-Ballou Diamond**, a name combining her last name and her fiancé’s. Park experts confirmed it’s a gem-quality crystal with a sparkly golden champagne hue, which made it stand out even among the many gravel and mineral bits in the field.

The diamond was found in wet sifted gravel, a method popular with park visitors hoping to rinse their way to riches. Unlike most raw diamonds, which can look cloudy or rough, this one shone with such classic brilliance that even a novice could tell it was something special.

The lucky find came just in time for the couple’s planned engagement — turning their Arkansas adventure into an unforgettable memory (and a sparkly one at that).

Why Diamonds Show Up in Arkansas

Crater of Diamonds State Park sits on top of a 100-million-year-old volcanic pipe, a rare geologic feature where diamonds were carried to the surface by rising magma. The source rock here is lamproite, a cousin to the more famous kimberlite found in African mines.

As magma surged up from deep within the Earth, it scooped up carbon crystals that had formed under intense heat and pressure in the mantle — and boom, diamonds! Erosion over time has scattered these gems through the top layers of soil and gravel.

Other minerals found at the site include:

- **Garnet**
- **Amphibole**
- **Jasper**
- **Barite**
- **Calcite**
- **And volcanic “host rock” fragments.**

Visitors are encouraged to keep all stones they find — and every year, a few lucky folks walk away with diamonds.

Location: Murfreesboro, Arkansas
Admission: ~\$15 for adults, ~\$7 for kids (prices subject to change)

Tip from a Park Geologist:
Diamonds at Crater of Diamonds often appear as rounded, metallic-looking crystals with a greasy luster. They don't sparkle like cut stones, but they feel slick when rubbed between your fingers!

More Info:
<https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/parks/crater-diamonds-state-park>

Follow me to **PARADISE**



Camp Paradise: A Week in Lapidary Heaven

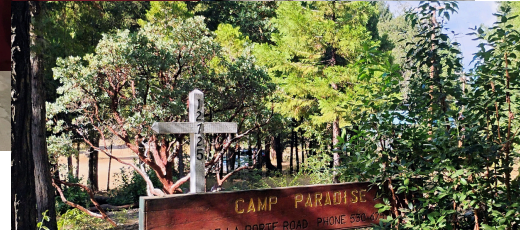
This August, I had the privilege of attending Camp Paradise for my second year. Nestled among the pines of the Plumas National Forest near Strawberry Valley, California, this weeklong retreat gathers enthusiasts from every walk of life who share one passion: discovering and transforming the treasures of the earth.

Although I arrived late in the evening—long after most campers had already settled in—the air still hummed with excitement. A few students had also come in late, and some night owls were simply too eager to sleep. Even an instructor was wandering the grounds, restless with anticipation for the week ahead. We crossed paths, struck up a conversation, and soon found ourselves sharing stories beneath the quiet canopy of stars. That chance meeting set the tone for the days to come: open, welcoming, and full of possibility.

A Hands-On Adventure

Camp Paradise offers a wide range of workshops: silversmithing, enameling, lost wax casting, wire wrapping, cabochon making, hard stone carving, and more. I dove in eagerly, determined to build on what I'd begun the year before.

An unexpected turn led to sleepless nights spent in the barn with my mentor, Tim Steeper—whom I affectionately call “Dad.” Together we corrected mistakes, prepared molds, and carried out a ceremonious firing and casting that had us working past 3:30 a.m. on the second night. It was a privilege to stand beside him in that workshop, learning not just technique, but patience, precision, and dedication.



Bonds That Last

One of the most meaningful parts of camp was the sense of camaraderie. Whether gathered around a workbench or sharing meals in the dining hall, conversations flowed easily. Friendships were forged, stories exchanged, and laughter carried late into the evenings. These moments—just as much as the techniques—are what make Camp Paradise unforgettable.

I carried that energy home with me. New friends, new inspiration, and even a few shiny new pieces became part of my story—and they helped me take home second place at the Kern County Fair. Proof that the lessons of camp extend far beyond its grounds.



Paradise as Ritual

Camp Paradise has become more than just a retreat for me—it's a ritual. A week of renewal where I shed the weight of social media and replace it with simply being social. I don't worry about the news or the noise; I focus only on the new creations I want to manifest with my own two hands.

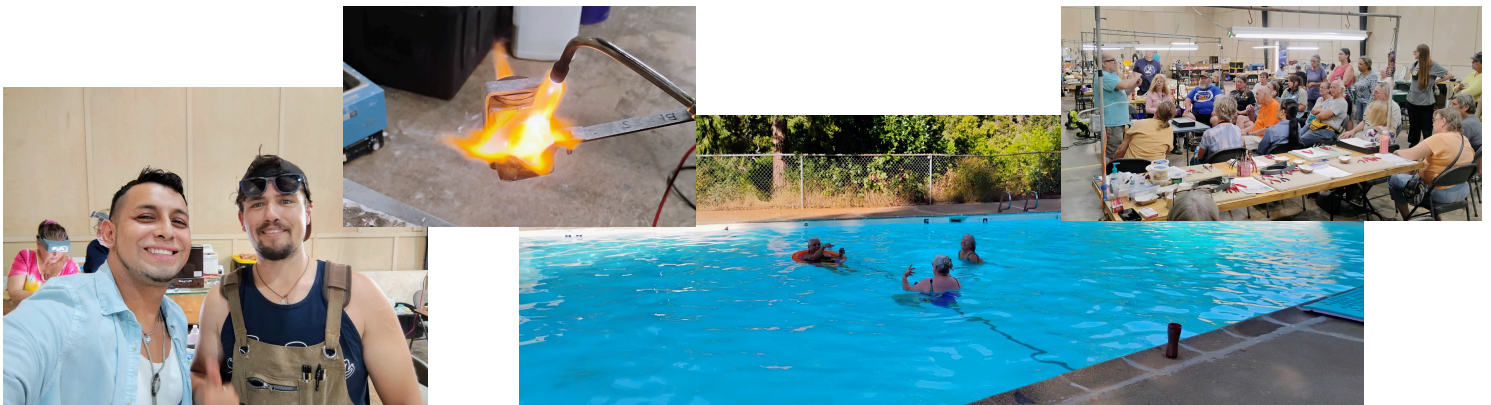
It's a deep immersion into nature. I walked through the dark forest in the middle of a thunderstorm, felt the rain drench me clean, soaked in the glow of sunrises and sunsets, and watched sparks fall from the sky in the form of shooting stars. Those moments reminded me that magic is always near, if only we pause long enough to notice.

Lessons Beyond Technique

During a moving conversation with Camp Director Gary Atkins, I found myself struck by the sheer beauty of what Camp Paradise truly represents. It felt like confirmation that we are made in the image of our Creator—that within us lies an innate desire to shape, refine, and celebrate the beauty and splendor of the natural world.

The ancients understood this truth well. Proverbs tells us that “wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.” Across cultures and centuries, people turned to stones not only for adornment, but as vessels of meaning, memory, and spirit. Many instructors and campers at Camp Paradise have been practicing these art forms for decades, passing their knowledge along with patience and generosity. To work with them is to join that long chain of artisans and seekers who found both beauty and truth in what the earth reveals.

Perhaps this is my training to carry those rituals forward: to help future students of the earth and its sciences see that when we work on a piece of stone, we are also working on ourselves—growing, healing, and transforming in the process. In that sense, Camp Paradise isn’t just about learning techniques—it is stepping into a living legacy. Each class, each story, each polished stone is a thread in a much larger tapestry, tying together generations of rockhounds and lapidary artists.



Paradise All Around Us

The biggest realization I’ve carried home since is this: each day is an opportunity for renewal. Nature surrounds us constantly. We can choose to immerse ourselves in our work instead of our phones. We can choose to gather, to share a meal, to laugh with old friends and new friends alike. And in that, I’ve learned something profound: Paradise is not just at camp. It’s here, all around us, every single day.

In the end, what we do with stones is what life does with us: under pressure, through friction, and with patience, we are shaped, refined, and revealed. Camp Paradise reminded me that creation is not finished—it is ongoing, alive, and inviting us to rise with it. Like gems pulled from the earth to be polished, we too are invited each day to shed yesterday’s dust, embrace the light, and shine with the brilliance we were always meant to carry.

So maybe next time you’ll listen and join me when I say: Come on—let’s go... Follow me to Paradise.

by Cristian Battazar

September's Stone Spotlight: Sapphire



Stones that Shape Our Passion

When you think of September, one gem immediately comes to mind: Sapphire. Known for its deep blue hues, sapphire has long symbolized wisdom, loyalty, and protection. But did you know sapphire isn't always blue? This mineral, part of the corundum family (like ruby), can appear in almost every color of the rainbow—except red, which earns the name ruby.

Geology

Sapphires form under intense heat and pressure in metamorphic and igneous rocks, often found in alluvial deposits where water has carried and concentrated them. They're the second hardest natural mineral after diamond, measuring a 9 on the Mohs scale, which makes them not only beautiful, but durable enough to endure centuries of wear.

History & Lore

In ancient Persia, people believed the sky's blue color came from a giant sapphire on which the Earth rested. Medieval clergy wore sapphires to symbolize heaven, while kings and queens used them as protective talismans against envy and harm. Even today, sapphire rings and pendants are seen as symbols of truth and constancy.

Lapidary Connection

For cutters and polishers, sapphire presents both a challenge and a reward. Its hardness requires diamond abrasives, and orienting the crystal correctly can reveal or obscure the famed "star effect" (asterism) in star sapphires. Lapidaries who unlock these secrets know the satisfaction of transforming a rough, dull crystal into a gem that sparkles with inner fire.

California Note

While not a major sapphire source, California is no stranger to gem-quality corundum. Small deposits have been found in areas influenced by metamorphic activity. For most collectors, however, Montana sapphires or international sources like Sri Lanka, Burma, and Madagascar provide the specimens we treasure.

So, next time you see a sapphire, remember: it's more than a birthstone. It's a piece of Earth's history, a symbol carried through centuries, and a challenge that still excites lapidaries to day.

Sapphire Quick Facts

Color: Most famous in deep blue, but can be pink, yellow, green, purple, and colorless. (All corundum colors except red, which is ruby.)

Hardness: 9 on the Mohs scale – second only to diamond.

Family: Corundum (Al₂O₃ – aluminum oxide).

Special Feature: Some stones display a star-shaped effect called asterism.

Sources: Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Madagascar, Montana (USA).

Symbolism: Wisdom, loyalty, truth, and protection.

Famous Uses: Royal jewelry, engagement rings, religious icons.

ROCKS AND MINERALS

Test Your Knowledge



IGNEOUS	SEDIMENTARY	METAMORPHIC
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ROCKIN' RECIPES



Rock Candy "Crunchy, jewel-like shards"

Ingredients:

- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 3¾ cups granulated sugar
- 1½ cups water
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon oil (or another candy oil of your choice)
- 1 teaspoon red food coloring (or more colors if desired)

Instructions

1. Prepare your jars / sticks

Roll the edges of two 16-inch squares of heavy-duty aluminum foil to form rims (to catch drips).

Generously sprinkle confectioners' sugar onto each foil square (this helps seed crystal formation).

2. Make the sugar syrup

In a large, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat, combine granulated sugar, water, and corn syrup. Stir until sugar dissolves and mixture boils (≈ 5 minutes).

Stop stirring after it begins boiling. Let it boil undisturbed until a candy thermometer reads 300–310 °F (hard crack stage) — about 25 minutes more.

3. Add flavor & color

Remove from heat. Stir in flavoring oil and red food coloring (or whatever color you prefer).

4. Pour & suspend sticks

Quickly pour the hot syrup onto the prepared foil squares.

Insert wooden sticks (or string), making sure they don't touch the bottom or sides. Use clothespins or weights to suspend them centered.

5. Let crystals form

Cover loosely (e.g. with plastic wrap) to protect from dust.

Let sit, undisturbed, in a cool, dry place. Crystals generally begin forming within a few hours, and it can take 3 to 7 days (or more) for large crystals to grow.

6. Harvest

When crystals are fully formed (around ~1-inch or more), gently remove from syrup and let dry on a plate. Discard leftover syrup.

Tips for Success

Use a candy thermometer to hit exactly the hard crack stage (300 °F). Too cool, and the candy won't harden.

Seed the sticks: Wet the sticks/strings, roll them in granulated sugar, and let that sugar dry before suspending—they need nucleation points for crystals.

Use glass jars (not porous materials) for better crystal growth.

Be patient. Crystals can take multiple days to fully form.

GOVERNANCE MATTERS: HOW OUR NONPROFIT WORKS



The San Joaquin Valley Lapidary Society (SJVLS) is more than a club—it is a nonprofit public benefit corporation. That means our work is guided not only by our passion for gems, minerals, and lapidary arts, but also by a formal governance structure that ensures transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

At the heart of that governance is the **Executive Board of Directors**. The Board provides the framework that supports every activity we enjoy—from workshops and field trips to shows and outreach. Board members and officers do more than just hold titles: they safeguard our nonprofit status, manage finances responsibly, and ensure decisions are made in the best interest of all members.

Each role carries a set of defined responsibilities. Together, these duties ensure that SJVLS continues to thrive, offer opportunities for learning, and remain connected to the larger lapidary community across California and the nation.

Serving on the Board allows members to shape the future of our Society, bring fresh ideas to the table, and ensure that the traditions of rockhounding and lapidary arts are passed to the next generation.

In the following section, you'll find clear descriptions of each officer and director position, taken directly from our bylaws (**Article VII**). Whether you're a longtime member or relatively new to the club, your participation can make a meaningful difference. We encourage every member to read them closely, reflect on their skills and interests, and consider how you might serve.

**Nominations are taking place now, and elections are held in November.
New officers are seated in January.**

GOVERNANCE MATTERS (CONT.)



SJVLS Officer & Director Job Descriptions

This guide is designed to help members better understand leadership roles and encourage participation in club service.

President

- Serves as General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of SJVLS.
- Presides at all Board and General Membership Meetings.
- Provides general supervision and direction of all club affairs.
- Serves as ex-officio member of all committees and ensures they fulfill their duties.
- Appoints Audit Committees in January and June to review Treasurer's books.

Vice President

- Performs all duties of the President in their absence or disability.
- Serves as Program Chair, arranging educational programs for meetings.
- Performs additional duties as assigned by the Board.

Secretary

- Keeps minutes of all Board, General Membership, and Committee meetings.
- Attends to club correspondence.
- Maintains original Articles of Incorporation and current Bylaws in the State of California.
- Distributes minutes to the Board within 10 days of meetings.

Treasurer

- Serves as Chief Financial Officer of SJVLS.
- Maintains permanent financial records, assets, and membership dues records.
- Deposits funds in approved depositories.
- Provides monthly financial reports to the Board and Membership.
- Coordinates audits in January and July; handles insurance and tax requirements.

GOVERNANCE MATTERS (CONT.)

Directors

- Attend Committee Meetings when appropriate.
- Advise and promote efficient handling of Society business.
- Perform additional duties as assigned by the Board.

CFMS Director

- Represents SJVLS at California Federation of Mineralogical Societies (CFMS) functions.
- Reports monthly to SJVLS on CFMS activities and resolutions.
- Encourages member participation in CFMS exhibits and events.

Past President

- Advisory role for one year following presidency.
- Invited to attend Board and Membership meetings in a non-voting capacity.
- Provides guidance on past practices to assist in governance.

Field Scout

- Maintains records of collecting sites and access.
- Arranges or leads Society field trips.
- Maintains permanent records of signed liability waivers for all trips.

Newsletter Editor

- Publishes the Society's monthly newsletter, the 'Slab and Gab'.
- Provides members with news, updates, pictures, and items of interest.
- Supports communication of club activities and educational content.

Are you interested in serving?

These roles are vital to keeping our club thriving. Elections are held each November, so talk to any current officer to learn more about how you can contribute!



“I held a Jewel in my Fingers”

BY EMILY DICKINSON



I HELD A JEWEL IN MY FINGERS —
AND WENT TO SLEEP —
THE DAY WAS WARM, AND WINDS WERE PROSY —
I SAID “TWILL KEEP” —
I WOKE — AND CHID MY HONEST FINGERS,
THE GEM WAS GONE —
AND NOW, AN AMETHYST REMEMBRANCE
IS ALL I OWN —

Upcoming Gem & Mineral Events

Joshua Tree Gem & Mineral Show Oct 1-5, 2025 Joshua Tree, CA

Nevada County / Grass Valley Show Oct 4-5, 2025 Grass Valley, CA

Shasta Gem & Mineral Society Show Oct 4-5, 2025 Anderson, CA – Shasta District Fairgrounds

Big Sur Jade Festival Oct 10-12, 2025 Harmony, CA

SJVLS Annual Camping Trip Oct 15-17 2025 San Simeon, CA

Fall Contra Costa Crystal Fair Oct 11-12, 2025 Walnut Creek, CA – Civic Park Community Center

Annual Opal Show Oct 18-19, 2025 Orange, CA

Humboldt Gem & Mineral Show Oct 31-Nov 2, 2025 Eureka, CA – Redwood Acres Fairgrounds

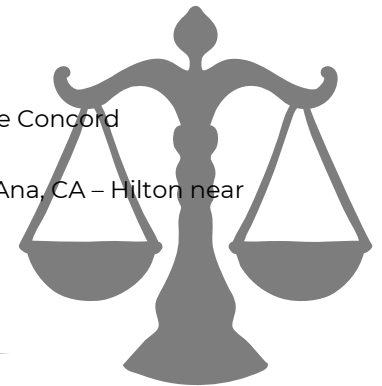
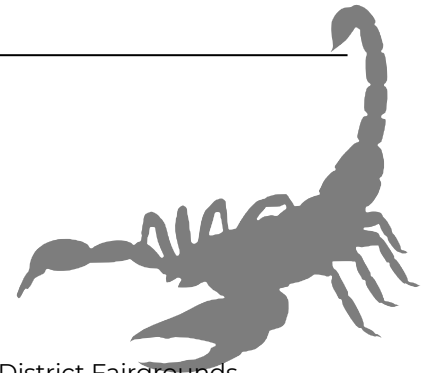
Indian Wells Gem & Mineral Show Nov 1-2, 2025 Ridgecrest, CA – Desert Empire Fairgrounds

West Coast Fall Gem & Mineral Show Nov 7-9, 2025 Santa Ana, CA

Contra Costa Mineral & Gem Society Show Nov 8-9, 2025 Concord, CA – Centre Concord

LLD Productions West Coast Fall Gem & Mineral Show Nov 14-16, 2025 Santa Ana, CA – Hilton near OC Airport

Fresno Gem & Mineral Society Show Nov 22-23, 2025 Fresno, CA – Elks Lodge



LIBRA

SEPTEMBER 22ND TO OCTOBER 22ND

LIBRAS ARE COMPASSIONATE AND EMPATHETIC PEOPLE. THEY ARE WILLING TO GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HELP OTHERS. THEY'RE SIMULTANEOUSLY EXTROVERTED AND INTROVERTED, STRATEGIC AND SPONTANEOUS, FOCUSED AND INTUITIVE. THEY WANT TO BE SEEN AS THE RESPONSIBLE FIGURE WHO CAN BALANCE OUT THE TURBULENT ELEMENTS AROUND THEM.

LIBRA BIRTHDAYS:

- **KIM TROMBETTA** - OCTOBER 11
- **JULIE WADE** - OCTOBER 11TH
- **NANCY BORGMAN** - SEPTEMBER 27TH
- **ZOEY CONRAD** - SEPTEMBER 22ND
- **PENNY DUKES** - SEPTEMBER 28TH

SCORPIO

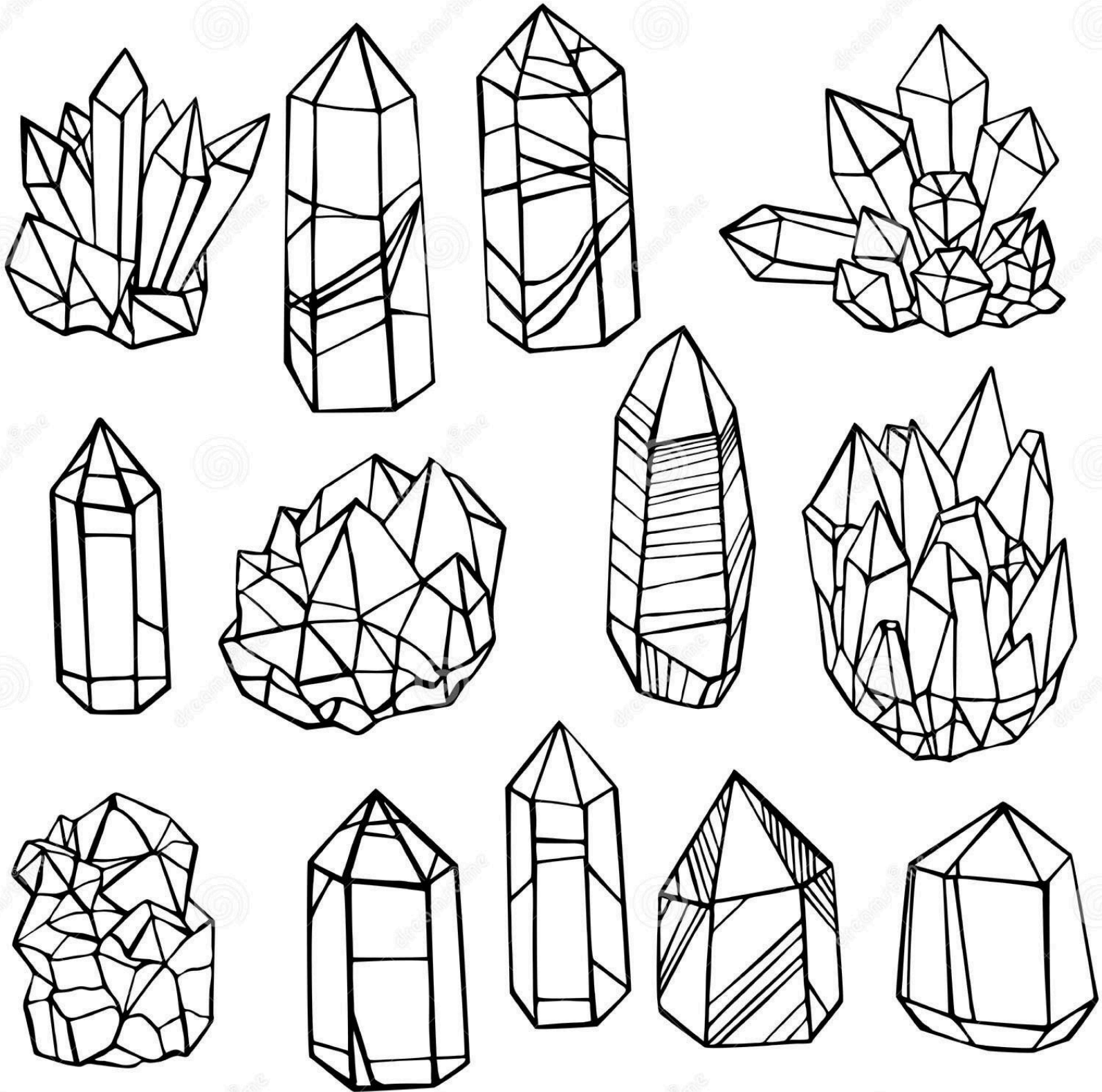
OCTOBER 23RD TO NOVEMBER 21ST

SCORPIOS ARE LOYAL, PASSIONATE, INTENSE, STRONG, AND INDEPENDENT. THEY CAN COME OFF AS ALOOF, SECRETIVE, DETACHED, AND A BIT INTIMIDATING SOMETIMES, SURE, BUT IT'S NOT FROM A PLACE OF MALICE. SCORPIOS CAN BE RELENTLESS. GIVE A SCORPIO A MEANINGFUL AND POSITIVE PURPOSE AND THEY COULD CHANGE THE WORLD!

SCORPIO BIRTHDAYS:

- **DESSY FAWN** - OCTOBER 23RD
- **LUIS CARDONA** - OCTOBER 30TH
- **JOANNA ALAS** - NOVEMBER 3RD
- **MATT MILBURY** - NOVEMBER 3RD
- **SALEM JOHNSTON** - NOVEMBER 7TH

Color & Chill



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