

MALACHITE:

THE CLASSIC GREEN MINERAL POPULAR IN DESIGN

Brecken Branstrator, GIA GG

These days, green is very in.

Though malachite has been used for jewelry and ornamental objects since antiquity, prized as a symbol of power and protection, the copper carbonate hydroxide mineral is now benefitting designers increasingly looking for new ways to use color. They are turning their attentions toward hardstones not only as center stones but also as accents or increasingly on beaded strands. Large jewelry houses have been using malachite more in their jewelry collections as well, including Pomellato and Van Cleef & Arpels.

Malachite is a bright, saturated green opaque mineral that gets its color from copper. It is typically found as crystalline aggregates with a banded appearance featuring light and dark green striations—the bands are a result of its formation process—but is also sometimes found as botryoidal clusters, a mineral habit that produces grape-like clusters of small, smooth globes merging into a larger mass, though the latter is more often used for specimens. It can also be found in combination with the rich, vibrant blues of azurite, sometimes referred to as azurmalachite by the trade.

According to Mindat.org, the mineral was named “molochitus” in antiquity (Pliny the Elder, 79 CE) after the Greek “malachí”, or “mallows,” referring to the green color of the leaves. It has been known in its current spelling since at least 1661.

Notable sources of malachite have been Congo, Zambia, Namibia, Mexico, Australia, and Russia. It is



Karina Choudhrie's Energy Ribbon Studs from the Vitamin Pink collection, featuring malachite, diamonds, and 18-karat gold.



Foundrae's malachite stone chain bracelet in 18-karat gold.

an abundant mineral and therefore reasonably priced, but those showing distinctive patterns or chatoyancy can command a slight premium.

Hardness varies from 3.5-4.0, so when it is set in pieces such as rings, it is often set low or in a protective setting so as to avoid getting scratched. It does take a good polish, though, so it often appears as cabochons, beads, in free form, or used in objet d'art.

Malachite should be stored in a fabric-lined case away from other jewels. It can also be altered by humid heat, water, sweat, or abrasives, so trade professionals should advise customers to avoid wearing their malachite pieces in a hot, humid places, like in the shower, and keep them away from lotions and perfumes. Trade professionals will know that malachite can be gently cleaned using a soft, dry cloth. ♦



Pomellato Ritretto malachite, black diamond, and 18-karat gold ring.

Gemworld International, Inc., 2640 Patriot Blvd, Suite 240, Glenview, IL 60026-8075, www.gemguide.com
© 2025 Gemworld International, Inc. All rights reserved.

All articles and photographs that appear are copyrighted by the author; the contributing person or company, or Gemworld International, Inc. and may not be reproduced in any printed or electronic format, posted on the internet, or distributed in any way without written permission. Address requests to the editor-in-chief.

The opinions expressed in this publication are the opinions of the individual authors only and should not necessarily be considered to be the opinions of the staff of Gemworld International, Inc. as a whole. Any website listings that appear in articles are for informational purposes only and should not be considered an endorsement of that company.