

I do enjoy autumn especially if it isn't raining too much. It's the softer light that accentuates the wonderfully subtle colours, so what could be more autumnal than Amber, my subject for this month.

## Things to know about Amber

by Sally Thornton

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1. Amber has been used in Jewellery ever since recorded time and Greek legend said that Apollo wept tears of amber when he was banished from Olympus.
2. The Greeks also discovered that amber can acquire a static electric charge when rubbed and so the word electricity is derived from electrum, the Greek name for amber.



Silver Amber Ring £42

3. In reality Amber is an opaque or translucent fossilised natural resin from an extinct variety of pine tree that has been submerged under the sea for some 60 million years.



Large cognac amber pendant with a leaf motif £90

Silver Cognac Amber Pendant with leaf & bead motif £62

4. As the pine resin oozed out of the trees, it occasionally covered small items such as insects and flora trapping and preserving them. These items, or inclusions, frozen in time give Amber one of its extraordinary and compelling properties.
5. The most frequent inclusions found in amber are flies or fungus gnats and on the Isle of Wight, deposits have identified midges and a wasp.
6. Occasionally the more unusual items turn up, such as a small lizard. Indeed the North American Natural History Museum has a famous example of a 25,000,000 year old gecko.



Silver oval Amber necklace £210



Silver Green Amber earrings £22

7. In the film Jurassic Park, DNA to recreate Dinosaurs was taken from amber inclusions, but in reality however, the chances of this ever being possible are pretty well zero. It did, however, make a fantastic film which resulted in a recent surge in awareness and demand in amber.
8. The 'amber room' in Catherine the Great's palace in Russia was a huge room totally lined and decorated with cut amber was described as the eighth wonder of the world. The amber was pillaged by the Nazi's in World War II, but despite searches was never found.



Silver Cognac Amber bracelet £55

9. Amber occurs in a range of different colours, but is most popular in shades of yellow, orange or brown. Green and red colours are also available and a comparatively rare blue amber is found in the Dominican Republic.



Silver Cognac Amber ring £32

10. Amber clarity ranges from transparent to opaque and it has a resinous lustre. Most amber specimens have pockets of air bubbles and various other inclusions.



Silver Cherry Amber drop earrings £79

Imitation ambers which have been around for centuries are on the increase, some even encapsulating a variety of wildlife! One older trick of the trade is the hot needle test to identify real amber as hot amber will give off a non acrid, aromatic piny odour. Although I don't suggest you try this one at home!

11. The majority of Amber used in contemporary jewellery comes from the Baltic regions although Amber can still be found around our coastlines. A few local people still walk the Norfolk beaches and collect small amounts, especially after the winter storms have driven amber ashore



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