App

The LAPIDARIAN

Maple Ridge Lapidary Club Newsletter December 2013, Vol.2, Issue 12

Seasons Greetings

REMINDERS

- Next General Meeting is Thursday **January 9th,** 2013 at 7pm
- Membership renewals for 2014 are now due. Pick up a renewal form at the Club or email m.ridge_lapiclub@yahoo.com to request a form you can print and sign.
- Don't forget to pick up Raffle Tickets when you are at the Club. We hope to exceed 2013 sales but we need everyone's help to meet that goal.
- Rendezvous is being held May 17-20, 2014 in Ashcroft. Check for details at: www.lapidary.bc.ca

Upcoming Club Shows: **No Shows are scheduled in January**

Field Trips: As always, check the BC Lapidary Society website for more information: http:/ www.lapidary.bc.ca/trips.html

Field Trip: Yale Bar, Sunday January 12, 2014, meet at 9am at Rancher's Restaurant at Bridal Falls, 53560 Bridal Falls Road, Rosedale, BC. Material: Agate, Sillimanite, Serpentine, Jade and Large River Rock. Equipment: Rock hammer, bucket, digging tools, gloves, waterproof boots, warm clothing. Accessbile by car (full tank of gas). Bring food, water and a back pack. Wagon Master Harley Waterson, 604-590-3289.

Field Trip: Hamilton Bar, Sunday January 26, 2014, meet at 9am at the Happy Prospector, 3005 Hot Springs Road, Agassiz, BC. Material: Agate, Jasper, Petrified Wood & River Rock. Equipment: Rock

hammer, bucket, digging tools, gloves, waterproof boots, warm clothing. Accessible by car (full tank of gas). Bring food, water and a back pack. Wagon Master: Jean Dyck, 604-802-2735.

Birthstone of the Month: Topaz

If cold December gave you birth,
The month of snow and ice and mirth,
Place on your hand a turquoise blue;
Success will bless whate'er you do.

According to Wikkipedia the poem above was first published in a pamphlet by Tiffany & Co. in 1870. While the author is listed as unknown, the poems are attributed to the Gregorian calendar which is also called the Western calendar or the Christian calendar. A chart included on Wikkipedia shows that in the 15th-20th century the November stone was heliotrope, ruby. In the US opal and turquoise, zircon, tanzanite are now the choice. Our British friends prefer tanzanite, turquoise while the Hindu culture lists topaz as the stone of choice. Which one do you prefer?

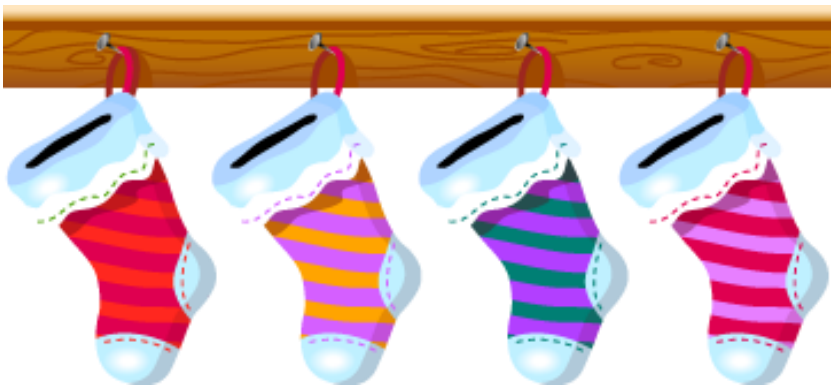
LOOKING BACK

At this time of year everyone seems to be looking back at the events of the past year. The Club has had an eventful year - new cabinets in the main floor back room, purchase of several pieces of equipment and the Billick collection, another successful Rock & Gem Show, our new Twitter account, several classes at the Club and another successful Friday Night BBQ season. What is your favourite memory from the Club this year?

TRIVIA

How well do you know your Club? (answers on last page)

1. What year did the Club start?
2. What is the Club stone?
3. What are the Club colors?
4. Where was the first permanent workshop located?



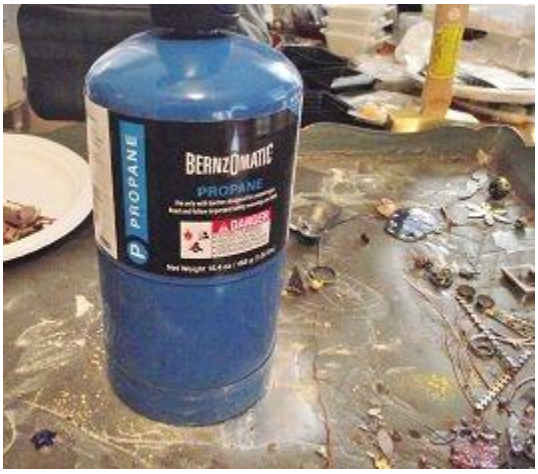
This month's first project from Jewelry Making Daily (December 11, 2013) provides some lessons learned from enameling. The second project, also from Jewelry Making Daily (December 27, 2013) gives us some things to consider about using brass in our jewelry projects.

Lessons Learned in Torch Enameling: You Can Do It!

I know many of you are asking Santa for torches or kilns and enameling supplies this year. When the jolly man comes through, I hope these "lessons learned" from my early days of enameling will come in handy. Enjoy! -- Tammy

When I wrote about my newfound love of brass a couple of weeks ago, I was surprised at how many people commented, "I didn't know you could enamel on brass!" Well, I didn't know you *couldn't* enamel on brass, so I did . . . and it worked just fine. For me, enameling on brass was no different than enameling on copper.

I was also surprised and ever-so-happy to see how many of you were prompted to try torch enameling after that. I can't tell you how happy that makes me, because I love love LOVE torch enameling and I want everyone to hop on that happy train with me.



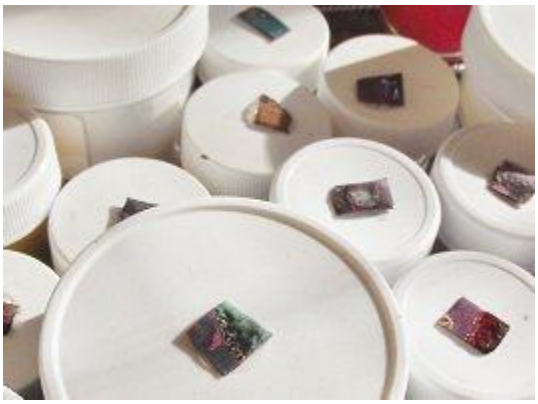
If you haven't tried torch enameling yet, don't be intimidated. For me, it seems the hardest part is getting comfortable with working so closely with a flame--intimately, even, since it's right in front of your face (and let's be honest, faces are pretty dang important parts). It's a pretty big flame, too, not a small flame like that of a micro torch, though if you solder, you're already comfortable around the flame. I made friends with the flame pretty fast and learned a few other lessons along the way. I hope they'll be helpful to you.

1. **Speaking of the torch and flame,** I've used both MAPP gas and propane, in the short-and-wide wide "fat boy" canisters that are shaped so that they can stand up on their own. (You'll see that I keep mine on a big metal tray. Much like for soldering, you want to have a fireproof workspace for torch enameling. If molten glass or metal drops out of the flame, or if I drop a piece I'm enameling off my mandrel, it will land on this metal tray and not burn the house down.) You could use brackets and such to attach canisters to your work table.

I've heard that propane isn't hot enough for enameling and can cause "muddy" or dull enamel colors, but I didn't experience that. I haven't been too picky though--for example, I haven't tried to enamel anything solid white or solid yellow, which are the colors I think would be most susceptible to getting "muddy." Honestly, even during my earliest experiments with enamels, I didn't see anything I thought was muddy or ugly. It's like when a little kid makes you art--it's all gorgeous!

2. **Mandrels are important.**For torch-firing beads, you'll want mandrels in a variety of sizes, because undoubtedly your beads will have a variety of holes. I ordered some small mandrels from Barbara Lewis's Painting with Fire Studio, and I bought some larger-diameter rods at a hardware store and cut them to manageable lengths. You'll want steel, because it doesn't conduct heat and won't get hot in your hands. My steel rods are both threaded (like a screw) and unthreaded; the threads are helpful in keeping things from sliding off, but of course they can also hold enamel in them and make it harder to remove the beads.

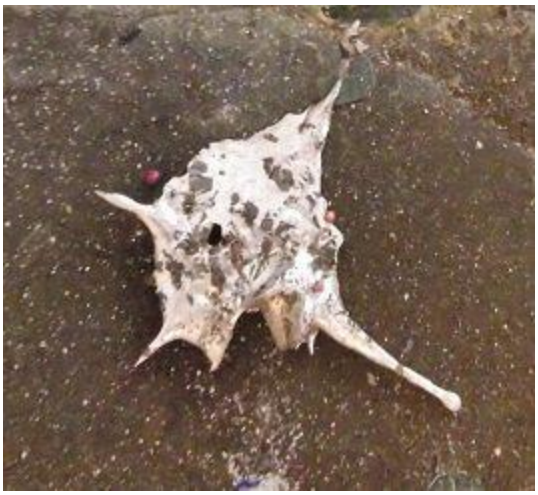
Kind of like metalsmiths always on the lookout for more hammers, I'm still trying to find more mandrels, ones that are shaped just right with tapered ends that aren't slick. I have an old awl that's my favorite so far--it's roughed up and tapered on the end, which helps it fit snugly into the holes of whatever I'm enameling. Somewhere I got a really long nail (we're talking about 8 inches long--where on earth did it come from?) that also makes a good mandrel.



3. When you buy enamels,**make color test chips** on scraps of metal. I glued my tiny test chips right onto the tops of the enamel jars. Make yours in *your* studio, using *your* torch, under *your*lighting and working conditions. That's the only way to know what color each one will truly be to *your*eyes, and even then there's a little difference depending on the enamel layers, the metal you're enameling on, and the position of the moon when you're enameling. (Of course that last one isn't true, or is it? Sometimes that's the only answer!) Use the kind of metal you'll most often be enameling (copper, silver, brass, iron, etc.) for your test chips.

If you put enough layers on an enameled piece, the color of metal underneath ultimately won't make much difference (silver vs. copper, etc.) *unless* you're using transparent enamels. Then the metal color does show through some, of course--it can also be a wonderful design element, as I mentioned before with the transparent red I enameled onto brass, creating a look of rose gold.

4. **If you're using transparent enamels,** it's also a good idea to make a test chip on a scrap of whatever metal you're enameling on when you begin a project. You don't always know how the metal will change in the heat during the enameling process (turn dark with firescale, form colorful flame patinas, etc.). It might turn icky, or it might be lovely . . . either way, it will be visible through your transparent glass.



5. Make every effort to **find out what metal** your beads or other components are made of when you intend to enamel on them. Most of those purchased in bead and craft stores are something-plated pewter or aluminum, both of which will melt faster than snow in Louisiana when you put it in the flame. Then you'll end up with a splat, like the one on the left, which used to be a pretty cool charm. Solid copper, brass, iron, and silver will hold up to the heat and enamel nicely.

6. **Wear safety glasses.** For real, wear them. I am bad and usually never wear them, but in this case, I wear them. When you're working with an unknown metal, it can spark and pop and shoot out little flaming bits in every direction. You're also working with molten glass.*Right in front of your face.* Wear the safety glasses. Do it. For real. Please?

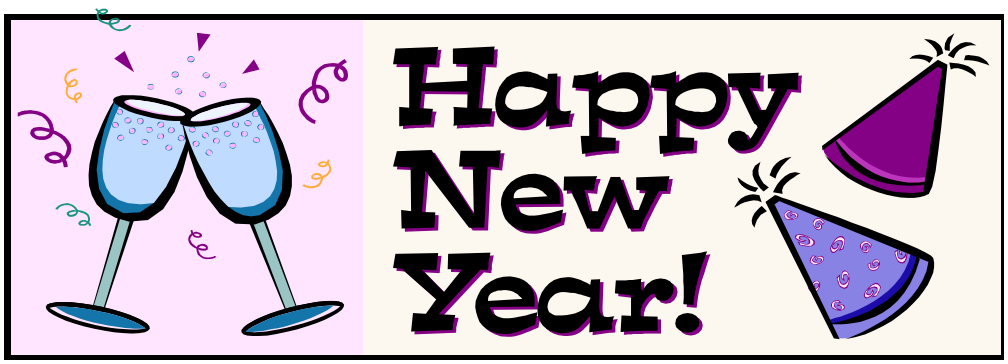
7. **Gloves aren't a bad idea.** Speaking of safety, it's good to remember that you're working with powdered glass that, when torched, becomes real glass that, if it gets pulled during the torching process, can become long glass needles. In my early experimentations (but not now, because I know better now . . . ahem . . .), if I got too much enamel inside a bead hole, trying to get that bead off the mandrel while it was still molten would pull a long glass needle, much like what lampworkers call stringers. You can burn, break, and/or sand them off; either way, you'll probably end up with tiny shards of glass. So when it comes time to clean up your enameling workstation, gloves aren't a bad idea. I don't think I'd recommend them during enameling, unless you get snug-fitting fireproof ones.

8. **Keep a *metal* bowl of water** nearby. Use metal, or even glass, but not plastic. Don't ask me how I know that. (But I bet you can guess!) Note that you do not quench enameled pieces after enameling--definitely don't, because that rapid cooling will shock them and make the just-turned-glass crack and probably fall off. But the water is important for other reasons--to quench heated metal if you see it's going to melt before you enamel it, to quench your fire tools if you're holding a metal component in the flame with them, to quench your fingers if you touch something that's a little too hot. (A fire extinguisher is wise to have on hand, too, but that goes without saying.)

These are some of the trial-and-error lessons I've learned while I've been exploring the fabulous world of torch enameling. Seriously, I can't say enough about how much I enjoy it, and I encourage everyone with even a little bit of interest to try it. Besides making beautiful jewelry, you get to watch the magic happen right before your eyes. (Your safety-glass-covered eyes, right? See #6 above.) Torch-fired enameling is very hands-on, allowing you to feel like you're not just making jewelry but you're creating art.

You probably already have the torch, so you just need enamels and a few small tools, like mandrels or a mesh screen and stand.

Tammy

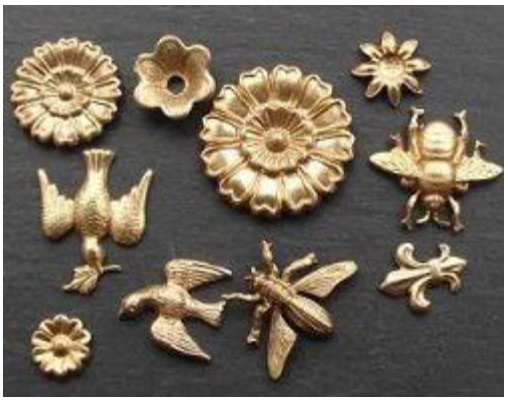


Alternative Metals for Jewelry Making: 6 Reasons I've Become a Fan of Brass

Here's a favorite post from the JMD archives about my newfound love of brass! Did you know brass was so versatile for jewelry making? --Tammy

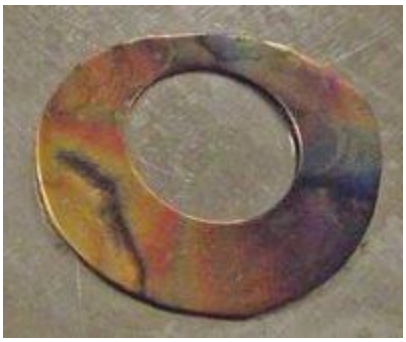
White metals have always been my thing. Back in the 1980s and '90s, I did wear yellow gold jewelry--but mostly because that's what my Dad, who was my primary jewelry-gifter at the time, bought me. Soon after that, possibly during my "hippie" college years, I became a fan of silver jewelry. (I've always been a HUGE fan of silver everything-else.)

As an official grown-up and many years since then, I stuck with white metals, adding the occasional white gold piece to my mostly silver jewelry wardrobe. When I started making my own jewelry, silver was naturally the way to go, for personal preference as well as affordability.



brass jewelry components from Nunn Design

But then . . . well, I won't remind you what has happened to the price of silver in the last decade or so. I'll skip that part and just say that in the past few years, I've really started to appreciate alternative metals for jewelry making, particularly copper and brass. We've talked about copper many times before, but brass hasn't gotten its share of the fame, so I wanted to give it some attention today. Here are six reasons why I like it.



1. Flame painting (aka heat patina) on brass is beautiful and fun to do. Just like copper, brass gives up gorgeous colors and patterns when you pass it through a torch flame.

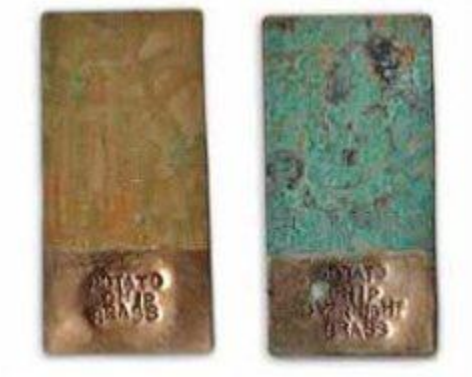
2. It resembles gold but it's oh-so-affordable. I haven't worn yellow-gold jewelry in ages and wasn't sure it was right with my skin tone, but recently I've been more drawn to the warm glow of yellow gold, especially textured 18k and 24k gold. Raw brass pieces can provide nearly the same warm yellow glow (and heft) of gold at a fraction of the ever-rising cost.

3. Brass can take the heat. While I've been enameling and playing with color on alternative metals like copper and brass, I've spent a small fortune buying metal components, charms and such at bead and craft stores, experimenting with what can take the heat and what can't. My findings? 99% of the stuff I've bought can't handle the heat of a torch, even pieces that are silver plated, and they become splats on my soldering table (or shoot sparks all over my studio, yikes!). It seems more and more of the commercial metal jewelry components are plated aluminum or pewter, and they melt immediately. Brass ones, however, hold up to the flame.

I made this stacked flower ring using three of the flowers fromNunn Design, a super-convenient sterling rivetable ring fromBeaducation.com, and #2839 red enamel from Barbara Lewis'sPainting with Fire Studio.

4. Transparent enamels on brass are gorgeous. I've been using transparent reds and greens in particular on some of those new Nunn Design brass stamped pieces, and I'm in love with the results. The transparent red on brass makes the whole thing look like rose gold or regular gold with just the prettiest hint of pink in it and I even see a touch of shimmer, like really pretty old-fashioned hard candy. Love.

5. Soldering on brass is not as hard as you might think,especially if you just have one step to solder. There's only one kind of solder for brass (no hard, soft, etc. to figure out and keep separated, like for silver), so there's no confusion there, and it comes in easy-to-use paste.



6. You can create beautiful patinas on brass, too. Kerry Bogert's *Rustic Wrappings* has great "recipes" for creating patinas on alternative metals like copper and brass using household items like vinegar, salt, and ammonia--even salt-and-vinegar potato chips, as shown here. My favorite verdigris looks just as lovely on brass as on copper.

Tammy

Kerry's brass patinated with potato chips

Trivia Answers: 1. 1958; 2.Purple, Gold & White; 3. Scotty Creek Agate; 4. Basement of the old ice arena downtown Maple Ridge

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