

TANZANITE MAKES THE GRADE

The International Gemological Institute and the Tanzanite Foundation have collaborated to produce a globally acceptable grading scale for the popular gem.

BY DIANA JARRETT

It stands to reason that a colored gemstone that ran the fast track from discovery to global familiarity within most gem collectors' lifetimes should have a unique grading system in place to assist both buyer and seller in understanding and universally communicating its value.

Tanzanite, the blue-violet gem variety of the mineral species zoisite, was unknown prior to its fluke discovery in Tanzania in the late 1960s. Originally, the gemstone was thought to be sapphire crystals when stumbled upon; it took some time to sort out its true identity. In short order, Tiffany & Co. became the visionary responsible for coining the globally recognized epithet, Tanzanite.

This one-source, twentieth-century colored stone quickly moved out of revered jewel houses to the mainstream, thanks in great part to e-commerce and jewelry shopping networks with customers numbering in the tens of millions.

NEW GRADING REPORTS

Now, the Tanzanite Foundation has pioneered an internationally understood grading system specifically for tanzanite called The Tanzanite Quality Scale™ (TQS) to document the quality components found in that gemstone. This

streamlines the way in which dealers and retailers are able to communicate about their tanzanite goods with one another. For the end user, the consumer, it means the ability to compare the quality of the stones they are looking at, similar to the way in which they can contrast and compare different diamonds by viewing the stones' diamond certificates.

The TQS grades according to specific standards under their 4Cs criteria of carat weight, color, clarity and cut, in the same way that diamonds are valued. Since all tanzanite is



This page, top: Tanzanite necklace by Michael Beaudry; center: 18.52-carat tanzanite cushion ring by Erica Courtney. Opposite page: Sample IGI Tanzanite Rarity Report.