

a million little pieces

Sea glass retains a timeless allure for collectors.



why all the fuss over fragments? “People know that sea glass is becoming a rare commodity,” says Richard LaMotte, author of *Pure Sea Glass*, a collectors’ guide. The colorful baubles are actually rubbish—glass shards that have been polished smooth by waves, sand, and stone.

“My favorites are the thicker, frosted pieces,” says Charles Peden, owner of By the Bay Treasures in Benicia, California. His personal collection includes weathered glass marbles, pre-1900 telephone insulators, bottlenecks from the 1700s, and greenish-black medicine bottles. “Collecting sea glass is an affliction,” he says with a laugh. “I just can’t quit!”

Richard adds, “The magic of all this is that Mother Nature has improved something that was once trash. So many things in life are this way. With time they become precious.”

For Richard’s tips on finding sea glass, turn to page 128.



expert advice

Sea glass authority Richard LaMotte helped organize the North American Sea Glass Festival in Santa Cruz (shown above). Here, he shares his tips with treasure hunters.

search for sea glass after a strong storm or during a spring tide, which reveals vast expanses of sand.

focus on rare colors such as orange, black, red, turquoise, and yellow. Kelly green, brown, and white sea glass is more common.

collect at will. Sea glass is not classified as natural material, so removing it from beaches is permitted.

seek highly prized round or oval sea glass, instead of the more typical triangular shape.

examine common features to date fragments. Remnants of bottle tops and bases tell collectors whether the original piece was machine produced or handmade.

look for “crizzling,” the pattern of subtle cracks that appears in especially old sea glass shards. 🍷

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