

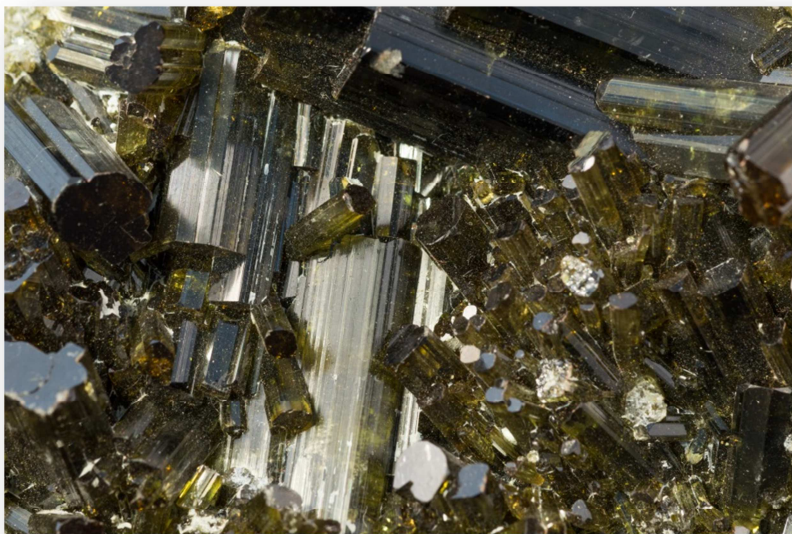
Vesuvianite or Idrocrase

Sorosilicate mineral

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Vesuvianite is a **fairly rare mineral** generally found in metamorphic rocks rich in limestone. It was first discovered in 1700 in small crystals found on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, from where it takes its mineralogical name.



(Photo MRSN)

In Aosta Valley, larger and better quality crystals have been found than those from Vesuvius, in **colours ranging from green, yellow and brown to red**. In some rare cases the crystals can be multi-coloured, with different coloured portions inside a single crystal. The discovery of Vesuvianite crystals in the Bellecombe (Châtillon) area and their publication in the international

mineralogy world dates back to the 1970s, when a few enthusiasts found some significant crystals of this type of mineral. Recognising the importance of their discovery, other mineral hunters were drawn to the area to search for the splendid Vesuvianite crystals, which even then were worth several millions of Italian lira each on the international market. The search soon grew out of control, with the use of explosives and pneumatic drills, leading to mineral hunting in the area being banned. The Aosta Valley specimens extracted in that period can be found today in mineral collections all over the world.

One interesting fact is that **Vesuvianite can be cut and polished just like rubies or emeralds**, and can become a precious gem if large enough and strongly coloured.

Bio-Montagne - Réseau d'éducation sur la biodiversité dans les zones alpines - Programma di cooperazione transfrontaliera Italia-Svizzera 2007-2013