

Central Dakota Gem & Mineral Society Bismarck, ND



Gypsum



The mild-mannered gypsum is not only a pretty sulfate to look at, but its harvested for numerous functions. The crystals are tabular, and often twinned. It can also form massive granular, and fibrous habits. Radiating forms are called “daisy gypsum,” and rose shaped forms are “desert rose.” gypsum tends to be fairly drab with color, varying from near colorless, white, and gray, to a more green, yellow, or a reddish hue. Its name comes from the Green word “gypsos,” meaning chalk or plaster.

It is mined for use as a fertilizer, plaster, chalk, and sheetrock/ gypsum board. The granular form called alabaster is used in carving and sculpture.

Gypsum has a white streak but ranges from transparent to opaque. It is a very common mineral found in many locations. It can be deposited from lakes and seawater, hot springs, and other evaporative environments.



Fibrous form

* * Becky trivia * * Two fossil sites across North Dakota, on opposite ends of the state, hold gypsum. To the east, the Pembina Gorge locality once held a vast inland sea. Gypsum is so plentiful there; it is the main mineral replacing the mosasaur and fish fossils, giving them a very soft, fragile form. Just off site, people can wander and pick up satin spar spears ranging from clear to black. To the west, the Whiskey Creek locality was once a swampy environment similar to the everglades. Sheets of gypsum can be found in and around those crocodile fossils as well.



Alabaster– granular gypsum



Desert Rose - rosette gypsum

The chemical formula is $\text{CaSO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, and a hardness of 2 on the Mohs scale.

Pellant, Chris. Rocks and Minerals. New York, Doring Kinderslay, 1992. Print Pg. 110

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gypsum>

Becky Trivia was originally written by Becky Barnes, a previous editor of, “Diggins From Dakota,” Also a long time member and contributor to the Central Dakota Gem & Mineral Society