

DESERT GOLD DIGGERS GAZETTE

The official publication of Desert Gold Diggers Inc., Tucson, AZ

The Desert Gold Diggers is a non-profit prospecting club based in Tucson, Arizona, devoted to all aspects of small scale mining including panning, sluicing, dry washing, and metal detecting. In addition to promoting small scale prospecting, the club exchanges ideas and information on the various aspects of prospecting & mining. Visit our webpage at <https://desertgolddiggers.com> for more club information.



Desert Gold Diggers has 19 claims in southeastern Arizona. The claims are located in several gold producing areas including the Greaterville, Arivaca, Oro Blanco (Ruby), Las Guijas, Old Hat (Oracle) and Banner (Pinal County) mining districts. The club is constantly evaluating and pursuing additional claims.

In This Issue

- Message from DGD President Ralph Montañño ([p.2](#))
- DGD Officer Elections ([p.2](#))
- Meeting and Event Summary / YTD Gold Price Trend ([p.3](#))
- Meet Bill Vasko - DGD Secretary ([p.4](#))
- DGD 2026 Spring Overnight Outing ([pp.5-7](#))
- Outing Director's Report for February and March 2026 ([p.8](#))
- February/March 2026 Membership Meeting Minutes ([pp.9-10](#))
- February/March 2026 Business Meeting Minutes ([pp.11-12](#))
- MASH Report/Club Store/Market Place/Spring Gold Nugget Raffle ([p.13](#))
- Arizona Goldbacks are Here! ([pp.14-15](#))
- Welcome New Members ([p.15](#))
- Gold Prospecting Equipment for Beginners ([pp.16-18](#))
- April/May 2026 Special Events Calendar ([p.19](#))
- Editor's Notes / Disclaimer ([p.20](#))

From the Desk of Ralph Montaña

President, Desert Gold Diggers Inc.

Hello Desert Gold Diggers! I hope everyone is having a good start in 2026.

Gold prices increased 62% in 2025—which was good if you were selling, but painful when you were buying. Desert Gold Diggers has felt the impact of buying gold at these higher prices, and it affects the number and size of nuggets we raffle at the monthly meetings. Regardless, board members are doing the best they can to ensure we raffle as many nuggets as possible at our meetings.



Ralph Montaña, Desert Gold Diggers President

By the way, it's back—the heat that is. We all know what precautions to take—drink plenty of water, know the symptoms of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, and most important, seek medical assistance if needed. Be safe, and ALWAYS let someone know where you're going or have a friend along.

After months of research, we have a new claim! As soon as we get maps, directions, and organize other documentation, we will send the pertinent information to club members. This claim is under members names, so we need to work together to make it work.

Be safe while working our claims and I hope you find some gold out there!

—Ralph

Desert Gold Diggers Officer Elections: April 7, 2026

Nominations are now closed and DGD Officer elections will be conducted on April 7, 2026, at the monthly members meeting for the following positions:

1. **President:** The principal executive officer of the club.
2. **Vice President:** Schedules speakers/steps in for the President when needed. **This position is currently VACANT.**
3. **Secretary:** Records the minutes at the members and business meetings.
4. **Treasurer:** Tracks all funds and securities of the corporation.
5. **Outing Coordinator:** Arranges and directs the monthly and the overnight outings.
6. **Historian:** Keeps club records up to date.
7. **Claims Director:** Coordinates the search for new claims.
8. **Newsletter Editor:** Produces and distributes the bi-monthly Gazette.
9. **Membership Director:** Maintains/updates list of club members.
10. **Website Liaison:** Acts as the interface between the Board and the web creator.

Officers and board members meet once a month for a couple hours to discuss club business, future events, and the direction of the club. One advantage of participating is that annual membership fees are waived for officers and board members.

Meeting & Event Summary (April-June 2026)

Membership Meetings

1st Tuesday of every month at 6:00 PM.

Ellie Towne Community Center
1660 West Ruthrauff Road
Tucson, AZ 85705-1253

The monthly meetings are an opportunity for club members to socialize, listen to guest speakers, and participate in nugget raffles at the end of the meeting.

Guests are welcome to attend!

Business Meetings

3rd Tuesday of every month at 6:30 PM.

IHOP
4187 N. Oracle Road
Tucson, AZ. 85705-2721
(Southwest corner of Oracle and
Lumberlost Road)

Club members are welcome to attend
the monthly business meetings.

Events Schedule

April:

07: Membership Meeting; 6:00 PM
Officer and Board Elections

12: (Sunday) Outing: BRUISER
CLAIMS; 8:00 AM; Circle K in
Oracle

21: Business Meeting; 6:30 PM

May:

05: Membership Meeting; 6:00 PM

09: (Saturday) Outing: SNOOZIN
CLAIMS; 8:00 AM; Arivaca Road &
Mile Post 7

19: Business Meeting; 6:30 PM

June:

02: Membership Meeting; 6:00 PM

07: (Sunday) Outing: HOPE
CLAIMS; 7:00 AM; Gardner Canyon
Road and Highway 83

16: Business Meeting; 6:30 PM

YTD Gold Price Trend 2026

Gold closed at **\$4,409** an ounce on Thursday, March 26, 2026. Gold prices have pulled back recently after reaching historic highs earlier this year, with prices softening amid a complex mix of global factors.



Meet Bill Vasko - DGD Secretary

Hi, my name is Bill Vasko and I'm the Secretary of Desert Gold Diggers (DGD). Last July, President Ralph Montano asked for help filling vacant Club Board member and Secretary positions. My daughter, Katherine Manning spoke with Ralph and she agreed to become a Board member and suggested that I "volunteer" for Club Secretary. My duties involve taking/preparing minutes for the Club's membership meetings and the Board's business meetings.

Our family has enjoyed being DGD members for several years. Serving as Club Secretary has proven to be very interesting and a good opportunity to become more involved in the operation of the Club. I would encourage other DGD members to "volunteer" and run for Club positions when the opportunity presents itself.

I've been a resident of Tucson for 70 years. I attended local elementary schools and Rincon High School. I graduated from the University of Arizona, where I met my wife, of 57 years, Eileen. We have a daughter, three sons, and a grand daughter. I worked for the City of Tucson for 32 years, over twenty of those years as Planning Director.

I was drawn to prospecting because of my interest in Arizona's geology, archaeology, western history and a love of the outdoors. Particularly photography, hiking, fishing, and archery hunting in southern Arizona, along the Mogollon Rim, and the White Mountains. I also enjoy researching the history and photographic record of Arizona's gold and silver boom towns, mines, and mill sites. It's sort of like panning for gold when you find an old photo that leads you to the exact spot where the picture was taken one hundred and fifty years ago. Since joining Desert Gold Diggers I've gained a much better understanding of the incredibly hard work and patience required by the old timers to overcome the harsh environments they prospected. My favorite Club claims are in the historic Kentucky Camp - Greaterville area, where we used to hunt, and where my son Joe found that first color in the gold pan.

My family and I have learned a lot by attending Club meetings, events, and sharing information with DGD members over the years. Club members have a wealth of information about gold prospecting that they have been willing to share. We've learned how placer gold is deposited along a stream bed, locating pay layers, screening material, high banking, dry-washing, panning concentrates, and the importance of filling your prospect holes.

Most of all, gold prospecting has been an outdoor activity that my family can share in some of the most beautiful and historic areas of Arizona.



DGD Secretary — Bill Vasko

— Bill Vasko

Desert Gold Diggers 2026 Spring Overnight Outing

The March 6-8 overnight outing was held at the Las Guijas Road campsite. Becky and Joe Marihugh were on-site on Wednesday, March 4, to reserve the camping area and to place signs along the road to provide directions for members not familiar with the area.



Members started to arrive on Friday to select campsites and set up prospecting equipment. The weather Friday night was nice and campers enjoyed sharing crockpot dinners. After dinner, members watched the movie *Cowboys and Aliens*.

The weather was cool on Saturday morning and Outing Director Darrell Marihugh hid nickels and pesos coins for the metal detector hunt. There were 74 targets buried and prizes consisted of gold nuggets, \$2 bills, dollar coins, silver feathers, and Arizona and Oklahoma Goldbacks. It was a successful hunt and all targets were found. Afterwards, members



went to the Pilgrim's Pride and Snoozin' claims and found some good gold, including a couple small nuggets and some pickers.

Lunch began at noon and consisted of hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, numerous side dishes, soft drinks, cookies, and desserts. Thank you to Becky Marihugh and Shawn Mosely for preparing, grilling, and serving the food to the hungry gold diggers.



The gold nugget/gift card raffle began after lunch. Thanks to everyone who participated and the volunteers who sold tickets. The member-donated items that were raffled were definitely appreciated.

At last count, over 60 members and guests attended the outing. The overnighter was a complete success with many thanks for the good weather and help from club and board members.

Detector Hunt Gold Nugget and Goldback Winners



Ken Herholz



Anibal Morales



Ivey Morris



Mike Kurpiewski



Andrea Offermann



Alfonzo Fernandez

Other Goldback Winners: Ted Vasiliw; Grady Dees; Sean Mosely; Max Offermann; Mike Kurpiewski; Becky Marihugh; and Kathy Weyhrich.

Silver-leaf Winners: Dave Riley; Kiralee Morales (2); and Cris Lespron

Lunch Raffle Winners

Yellow Ticket Nugget Winners

Darrell Marihugh
Jose Lizarraga

Rick Harrison
Cris Lespron

Joe Vasko
Ken Herholz (2)

Mike Kurpiewski
Steve Martin

Red Ticket Nugget Winners

Jose Lizarraga

Ken Herholz

Arizona and Oklahoma Goldback Winners

Grady Dees
Mike Kurpiewski
Kathy Manning

Max Offermann
Jim Larson
Jose Lizarraga

Steve Martin
Lincoln Beard
John Stringer

Doug Hayden

Other Raffle Winners

Bedrock Bob
Grady Dees
Dave Riley

Ken Herholz (2)
Lincoln Beard
Ray Darragh

Bill Vasko
Ted Vasiliw
Rixley Wilcher (2)

Joe Vasko
Dan Fairbanks



David Fuller's Gold

Desert Gold Diggers would like to say **THANK YOU** to everyone that contributed by delivering and setting up equipment, preparing the food and amenities, and providing the needed support to make this such an enjoyable event. Our overnight outings require a considerable amount of time, effort, and planning and without your support, these great outings would not be possible.



March 2026 Overnight Outing

Outing Director's Report (FEB 8): Placer Pond Claims

Members met at 8 AM on Sunday, February 8, at Highway 83 and the Greaterville Road turnoff with 37 members signing in for the outing.

I hid 24 nickels for prizes of gold nuggets, \$2 bills and \$1 coins. All targets except one (for a \$1 gold coin) were found with two of the three gold nugget winners being won by new members.

Gold nugget winners: Brent Gutierrez, Dave Riley, and Jeremy Mc Bride.

\$2 bill winners: Steve Barthelmy, Robyn Goldman and Bink.



After the metal detector hunt, members headed to the Placer Pond claims to metal detect and used recirculation sluice set-ups to pan for gold. Some small gold was being found in the area where I was prospecting. Some new members were shown the claim including the basics and how to sluice and how to prospect the wash. The weather was perfect and members started leaving around 1:00 PM. The outing was a complete success.

Next month's outing will be March 6-8 overnight outing at the Snoozin and Pilgrims Pride claims. Hope to see everyone there and keep finding that shiny!

—Darrell Marihugh

Outing Director's Report (MAR 6-8): Arivaca Claims

The week started on Wednesday and five board members showed up to reserve the camping spot, receive the porta-pots, and do some dry-washing. By Thursday there were eight camps set up and on Friday members headed to Snoozin and Pilgrims Pride claims to drywash and gold was being found. By Friday night there were 16 camps set up. We had a potluck for dinner and watched Cowboys and Aliens on the projector.



On Saturday, 58 members signed in for the detect hunt consisting of 74 targets for prizes or 3 gold nuggets, 10 goldbacks, three \$2 bills, five silver feathers and 53 dollar coins. All targets were found. Afterward, I took some new members out to drywash until lunch.

At noon, Becky and others cooked hamburgers and hotdogs with side dishes. A raffle followed lunch for prizes which included 10 gold nuggets, 10 Goldbacks, and a few other prizes. After that, some members helped clean up and others went back to the claims to drywash. By Saturday night most camps had cleaned up with 8 camps staying until Sunday. Overall the outing was a great success—we had beautiful weather and members were finding gold! A big thanks to all the board members who helped make this happen and thanks to all the members who showed up and participated.

Next month's outing will be Sunday, April 12, at the Bruiser claims.

—Darrell Marihugh

Membership Meeting Minutes: February 3, 2026

- Outing Director Darrell Marihugh convened the meeting at 6:08 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance; asked about February birthdays, anniversaries and guests; reported that Ralph Montano was recovering from surgery and could not attend the meeting; asked about MASH reports and noted the large attendance and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.
- The February 8 outing will be at the Greaterville Placer Pond claims. Members should meet at the Highway 83 Greaterville Road turnoff by 7:45 AM Sunday. The group will leave at 8:00 and travel together to the detector area and then to the claims to prospect.
- Darrell introduced Ben “the Coin Geek” from Old Pueblo Coin. He discussed the history of the earliest minted coins and history of the US Mints. Discussed current US Mint locations: Philadelphia, PA; San Francisco, CA; Denver, CO; & West Point, NY, as well as the history of other official US Mints: Charlotte, NC; Dahlonega, GA; New Orleans, LA; and Carson City, NV. Mints were often located near large gold or silver strikes. Silver mined in Tombstone, AZ, was used to mint Morgan Dollars and other coins produced at the New Orleans Mint from 1882-85. Ben showed examples of unique and beautiful coins minted during the westward expansion of the US. Darrell presented Ben with a gold nugget in appreciation of his talk.

Raffle winners:

- Hat: Becky Marihugh
- Shirt: Kevin Keck
- Badge: Shawn Mosely
- Find of the Month: David Fuller
- Yellow Ticket: Glen Corey; Joe Vasko; Shawn Mosely, Joyce Stringer, David Fuller, Joe Marihugh, Anibal Morales, Chris Bennett, Ted Vasiliw.
- Red Ticket: Brad Guinyou; Bink
- Find of the Month: Kayelynn Fuller
- Hangover Draw: Kathy Manning & Keith Oliver
- **6.78 gram Gold Nugget Winner: Anibal Morales**



Anibal Morales

- Darrell thanked everyone for attending and encouraged members to attend the Sunday outing.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM

Membership Meeting Minutes: March 3, 2026

- Outing Director Darrell Marihugh convened the meeting at 6:07 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance; he asked about any March birthdays, anniversaries, and if there were any guests. He reported that President Ralph Montano was recovering from surgery but would attend the March outing. He asked if there were any MASH reports. He spoke about the April Elections and encouraged members to fill out nomination forms if you would like to run for the Board or Officer positions.
- Darrell announced that the March 6-8 weekend outing will be held at the Snoozer and Pilgrims Pride claims. There will be a Pot Luck dinner Friday night, followed by a movie. The main events will occur Saturday at 8:00 AM with the Metal detecting hunt. After the detector hunt members will proceed to the claims. The barbecue lunch of hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans with water and sodas will begin around noon. Members are encouraged to bring a side or dessert of their choice. The lunch will cost six dollars per person. A raffle for gold nuggets and other items will follow. Members can then return to the claims for more prospecting and may camp out over Saturday night. The event will conclude on Sunday.
- Darrell then introduced club member Jack Satkoski, who conducted a presentation about meteorites. This detailed presentation included the topics of meteorite origins, early scientific study, classification,

identification, and most importantly where to hunt for them. He also talked about the Meteoritical Bulletin Database web site that tracks and plots meteorite fall locations. Most meteorites are found in Antarctica and the Sahara and other sand deserts. He noted that some specimens are worth over a \$1000 per gram. Meteorites that come from Mars and the Moon are the most rare and particularly valuable. He showed photographs of the famous Tucson Ring meteorite, found in the Santa Ritas (possibly in the Box canyon, Greaterville, or Madera canyon areas). Jack also had a display of different types of meteorites as well as what to not look for. The informative presentation concluded with an interesting question and answer session. Darrell presented Jack with a gold nugget in appreciation of his talk.

Raffle winners:

- Hat: Dennis Stahl
 - Shirt: Becky Marihugh
 - Badge: Kevin Keck
 - Yellow Ticket: Glen Corey; Lincoln Beard; Dan Scheper; Dave Riley; John Wroten; and Bink.
 - Eric Zacharias, and Leo Reynoso G
 - Red Ticket: Darrell Marihugh and Dave Riley
 - Gold Specimen: Bill Horky
 - Find of the Month: Skyler Arne
- Darrell adjourned the meeting at 7:34 PM.

Business Meeting Minutes: February 17, 2026

- Chairman: David Fuller convened the meeting at 6:30 PM.
- Secretary's Report: Bill read the January 20 business meeting minutes; minutes approved.
- Gazette Editor's Report: Ray is working on the March gazette and Bill Vasko will provide his bio for the newsletter.
- Webmaster Report: Anibal reported that the Club's Web site was operating well. There was a brief discussion about monthly web payment process and status. Anibal will take action to address any website issues.
- Membership Director's Report: Becky reported we have 22 new members, 4 renewals, and 15 non-renewals, an increase of 11 with a total club membership of 362, the highest since she took office.
- Treasurer Report: - Becky read the Treasurer's report for January 2026. The complete report is available to club members upon request.
- Gold Master's Report: Joe reported on the Club's gold inventory, expenditures and income since the last business meeting. Over 100 members attended the last two club meetings and participation in the gold raffle is high. The large 6-gram nugget was raffled at the last meeting.
- Outing Director's Report: Darrell reported that the February 8 Outing was held at the Placer Pond Claims. See [page 8](#) for the complete report. The overnight outing will be March 6-8 at the Snoozin' and Pilgrim's Pride Claims. Information about the location and outing information will be sent to club members.
- Claims Director's Report: Hank reported the Club's new claim, AU1, was still in the Forest Service review process. Hank discussed possible items for sale at the Club's store and a discussion followed regarding the provision of embroidered T-shirts, hats, badges, and other items.
- Historian's Report: Mary reported there will be a speaker at the next meeting that will discuss meteorites.

OLD BUSINESS

- Old Business: There was an update regarding Trail Life program requests. Discussion then focused on preparation for the March 6-8 Spring Outing. Ralph then discussed the April elections agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

- Bob Melzer motioned to have the club print business cards for members, that could then be distributed to people interested in joining the Club. Bedrock Bob moved that a limit of \$150 be provided to print the cards. Bob accepted, and the motion was unanimously approved.
- Joe suggested that the Club purchase "Gold Backs" for raffle prizes in lieu of gift cards. The motion was unanimously approved.
- Bedrock Bob asked what the board wanted to do to maintain and increase membership. General discussion followed. Ralph summarized by stating we need more good claims, good speakers, and good gold raffles.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:44 PM.

Business Meeting Minutes: March 17, 2026

- Chairman David Fuller convened the meeting at 6:30 PM.
- Secretary's Report: Bill read the February 17 business meeting minutes. Minutes approved.
- Gazette Editor's Report: Ralph reported that Ray was unable to attend tonight but was working on the Gazette. Ralph asked for volunteers to provide their biography in the April/May issue of the Gazette. Anibal Morales volunteered to provide his bio for the next issue.
- Webmaster Report: Anibal reported that the Club's Web site was operating well and he will address any issues when needed.
- Membership Director's Report: Becky reported there are 18 new, 10 renewals, and 15 non-renewals, for a total club membership of 378. Becky motioned per her previous suggestion that new member's fees be increased from \$65 to \$75 dollars as a motion and the motion was approved by unanimous consent.
- Treasurer Report: Becky provided a Finance report for January 31 – February 27, 2026. Discussion followed. The complete report is available upon request.
- Gold Master's Report: - Joe reported on the club's gold inventory, expenditures, and income since the last business meeting. Membership attendance and participation in the gold raffle continues to be high. General discussion followed.
- Outing Director's Report: Darrell reported that the March 6-8 Spring Outing was held at the Snoozin' and Pilgrim's Pride Claims. See [page 5](#) and [page 8](#) for the Outing Director's report and additional information.
- Claims Director's Report: Hank reported the Club's new AU1 claim was approved. A general discussion regarding the possibility of holding an outing at the new claim followed.
- Historian's Report: Mary reported speaker contacts with The Association of Miners and Duval mines. Joe reported that the May meeting will include a presentation on goldback certificates.

OLD BUSINESS

- Ralph discussed the April elections and the need to fill the vacant Vice President position. General discussion followed.
- Becky provided an update regarding the printing of business cards for distribution to people interested in joining the Club.

New BUSINESS

- Ralph raised an item for discussion regarding the work load for current board positions. General discussion followed. Without objection Dave moved, Grady 2nd, that Joe Marihugh be assigned the duties of Treasurer. The motion was approved by unanimous consent.
- Dave informed the Board to be on the look out for any spam e-mails requesting money or information using the Club's name. Do not respond to such requests and report them to the Board.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.

MASH Report

1. Ralph Montano had hernia surgery.

If you have an illness, injury, or death in the family please contact Amber Clark at amclark4691@gmail.com

Club Store

Be sure to stop by the Desert Gold Diggers Club Store at the monthly membership meetings. You can purchase clothing and prospecting items such as:

- Columbia long-sleeve shirts
- DGD polo shirts, T-shirts, hats, and patches
- DGD club license plates
- DGD window transfer decals
- Bucket handle grip replacements, scoops, and numerous other prospecting items.

The Club Store carries DVDs that contain the color “topo” maps, GPS coordinates, directions to the claims, and other useful information. Hard copies of the laminated color topo maps with the GPS coordinates and directions to the claims are also available.

Please support the Desert Gold Diggers with purchases from our club

Market Place.....



If you’re searching for something specific that you’d like to buy or sell, or have lost/ found something while on our claims, please contact DGDGazette51@gmail.com.

Provide a description of what you would like to buy or sell, include pictures (if applicable) and your information will be posted in this section of the Gazette.

Spring Gold Nugget Raffle



Raffle tickets are now available for a **4.6 gram** gold nugget.

The raffle tickets are \$2.00 each and may be purchased at the membership meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. The lucky winner will be selected at a future members meeting.



4.6 gram nugget

Arizona Goldbacks are Here!

On November 18, 2025, Goldback Inc. launched the **Arizona Goldback** series, the 8th state to join this innovative line of spendable gold notes. Each intricately designed gold bill contains real .9999 fine gold and is a miniature work of art and a moral reflection of Arizona’s soul—combining fine engraving, historical storytelling, and spiritual symbolism.



Arizona Goldback Series

What is a Goldback?

Goldbacks are a form of currency made with a small amount of 24-karat gold. They are shaped like banknotes and the gold is contained between two layers of clear, decorated polyester. Goldbacks come in eight denominations and the number on the Goldback indicates its denomination and reflects its precise fractional gold content measured in thousandths of a troy ounce.

Goldback Denomination	Virtue	Amount of Gold
1/2	“Fides” (Faith)	Contains 1/2,000 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
1	“Temperantia” (Temperance)	Contains 1/1,000 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
2	“Exploratio” (Exploration)	Contains 1/500 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
5	“Lex et Ordo” (Law and Order)	Contains 1/200 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
10	“Virtus” (Valor)	Contains 1/100 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
25	“Tenacitas” (Tenacity)	Contains 1/40 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
50	“Curiositas” (Curiosity)	Contains 1/20 Troy Oz. of 24k gold
100	“Libertas” (Liberty)	Contains 1/10 Troy Oz. of 24k gold

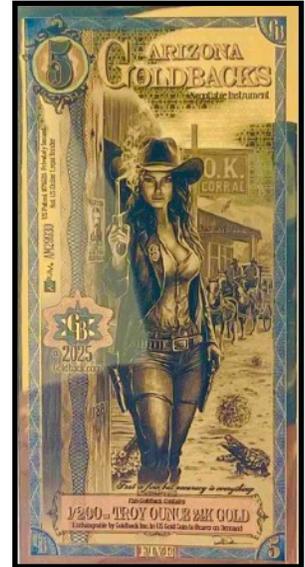
Arizona Goldbacks are Here! *(continued)*

What is a Goldback?

Goldbacks are designed for everyday transactions, whereas the US dollar is not backed by a physical commodity like gold or silver, but is instead supported by the "full faith and credit" of the US government. Goldbacks are available in Utah, Nevada, New Hampshire, Wyoming, South Dakota, Florida, Oklahoma, and now in Arizona. Each state has its own unique designs and series of Goldbacks which can be used as currency at specific locations, whereas dollar bills are accepted nationwide.

For general information on the history of Goldbacks, check the JUN/JUL 2025 issue of the Desert Gold Diggers Gazette on our website at: https://desertgolddiggers.com/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2025/08/JUNJUL-2025-DGD-Gazette.pdf

Information about Arizona Goldbacks may be found at: <https://www.goldback.com/start-preordering-arizona-goldbacks-now/>



5 Goldback

Welcome NEW Club Members!



- Daran & Christina Borth (Arivaca)
- Scott & Jamie Brown (Bisbee)
- Xavier & Jose Casillas (Tucson)
- Paul Clark (Benson, AZ)
- Duane Cope (San Manuel)
- Amanda DeRussy (Benson)
- Daniel DeWitt (Tucson)
- Michael Donnelly (Tucson)
- Ethan & Gretchen Doubleday (Marana)
- Stephen Engle (Salt Lake City, UT)
- Daniel & Kathy Fairbanks (Sundance, WY)
- Mark & Alyssa Fierro (Tucson)
- Larry Gilgenbach (Sierra Vista)
- Stephen/Robyn Goldman (Dunwoody, GA)
- Brent Gutierrez (Tucson)
- Daniel Hickman (Tucson)
- Peggy Higgins (Tucson)
- Mark & Tricia Johnson (San Manuel)
- Jeannie & Sung Ju (Tucson)
- Steven & Theresa Lacy (Williams)
- William & Andrea Mangum (Pima)

- Jeremy & Angela McBride (Vail)
- Jesse Micander (Tucson)
- Steven Pearce (Vail)
- Brian & Michelle Pelletier (Tucson)
- Jesse Pocobello (Vail)
- David & Cynthia Pulsifer (Tucson)
- James Redmond (Tucson)
- Fred Stubenrauch (Tucson)
- Joey Torres (Tucson)
- Mike & Vicky Toye (Green Valley)
- Dennis & Janet Tyas (Tucson)
- Gary & Steve Wall (Tucson)
- James & Sara Ward (Neilsville WI)
- Rixley Wilcher (Tucson)
- Delwyn Williams (Broomfield, CO)
- Caleb Wolf (Tucson)
- Mary Wood (Marana)
- John & Rochelle Wroten (Tucson)
- Eric & Rebecca Yantis (Tucson)

Gold Prospecting Equipment for Beginners

Since January 2026, more than 70 new people have joined Desert Gold Diggers. The intent of the following information is to provide our new members with an idea of the basic equipment needed to enjoy gold prospecting without breaking the bank! It doesn't require a massive investment or a vast collection of specialized gear. The core of successful prospecting for beginners lies in understanding a few fundamental tools that have been tried and tested for generations. These essentials allow you to efficiently search for, separate, and collect gold.

The Absolute Must-Haves

These are the items you absolutely need to begin prospecting. Without these, you're essentially trying to mine without the right tools for the job.

- **Gold Pan:** This is your primary tool for separating gold from dirt and gravel.
- **Sluice Box (Small/Portable):** While a pan is essential, a small sluice can significantly increase your recovery rate when you find a promising spot.
- **Classifiers (Screens):** These screens help you sort larger rocks from finer material, making panning much more efficient.
- **Snuffer Bottle:** Perfect for safely collecting tiny gold flakes and dust.
- **Digging Tool:** A sturdy shovel or a hand trowel is crucial for excavating material.
- **Bucket:** For carrying materials and water.
- **Water Source:** Access to a stream, river, or lake is fundamental, but many club members bring their own water to the claims.

Understanding Your Essential Gold Mining Tools

The Mighty Gold Pan

The gold pan is the quintessential gold mining tool. It's been used for centuries and remains incredibly effective. The basic principle is simple—gold is much heavier than typical river sand and gravel. By swirling water and material in the pan, the lighter gravel and sand is washed away, leaving the heavier gold behind.

For beginners, we recommend a plastic pan. They are lightweight, durable, and often come with “riffles” (ridges) built into the sides. These riffles help trap gold more effectively during the panning process. Look for a pan that is at least 14 inches in diameter. The larger surface area allows you to process more material and makes it easier to see your results.

Key Features to Look For in a Beginner Gold Pan:

- **Material:** High-impact plastic is ideal—lightweight and won't rust.
- **Size:** 14-inch diameter is a great all-around size for beginners.
- **Color:** Green or blue pans offer excellent contrast, making it easier to spot gold flakes.
- **Riffles:** Built-in riffles can significantly help with gold retention.

Gold Prospecting Equipment for Beginners *(continued)*

Classifiers: The Unsung Heroes of Efficiency

A classifier, also known as a sieve or screen, is used to sift larger rocks and debris from the paydirt you intend to pan. This process is crucial for several reasons:

- **Reduces Panning Time:** You're not trying to swirl boulders out of your pan.
- **Prevents Loss of Gold:** Large rocks can sometimes trap small gold pieces.
- **Easier to Work With:** Finer material is much easier to pan efficiently.

Beginners usually start with two standard classifier sizes nested one above the other, with a bucket underneath. A common setup is:

- **Top Screen:** 1/2 inch mesh (catches largest rocks)
- **Bottom Screen:** 1/4 inch mesh (catches finer material, the real target for panning)

The Versatile Snuffer Bottle

Once you start seeing those tiny specks of gold in your pan, you'll need a way to collect them. The snuffer bottle is a squeeze bottle with a tube on one end. You use the tube to aim at the gold and gently squeeze the bottle to suck the gold flake or dust into the bottle through a vacuum effect. They are incredibly simple but indispensable. You can get them in various sizes, but a medium-sized bottle (around 6-8 ounces) is perfect for beginners. Make sure it has a good, flexible tube that can reach into the corners of your pan.

Scooping and Digging: Your Hands and Their Tools

You need a way to get the material you want to process. For beginners, this means a reliable digging tool. What's best depends on where you're prospecting.

- **Hand Trowel or Small Shovel:** Excellent for working with loose gravel and sand in stream beds or shallow deposits. Look for one with a sturdy metal head and a comfortable grip.
- **Dredge (Small, Manual):** While more advanced, some small, manually operated dredges can be considered by very ambitious beginners, but this is usually a step beyond the absolute essentials.

Always consider the environment you'll be working in. If you're digging in hard-packed earth, you'll need something more robust than a flimsy gardening trowel. However, for typical stream prospecting, a good quality hand trowel is often sufficient.

Buckets: The All-Purpose Carrying Solution

Simple, yet vital. At least one or two sturdy 5-gallon buckets are a must. You'll use them for:

- Carrying paydirt from your dig site to your panning location
- Transporting water
- Holding classified material
- Storing your equipment.

Gold Prospecting Equipment for Beginners *(continued)*

Frequently Asked Questions About Gold Mining Equipment For Beginners

1. What is the single most important piece of gold mining equipment for a beginner?

Answer: **The gold pan** is the single most important piece of equipment. It's the primary tool for separating gold from gravel and sand, it's inexpensive, and it's fundamental to learning the basic principles of gold recovery.

2. How much should I expect to spend on beginner gold mining equipment?

Answer: You can assemble a complete beginner's kit for under \$100. A good plastic gold pan (\$20-\$30), a set of classifiers (\$40-\$60), a snuffer bottle (under \$10), and a sturdy shovel or trowel (\$15-\$30) will get you started.

3. Do I really need a classifier, or can I just use my gold pan?

Answer: While you can try to pan without a classifier, it's highly inefficient and frustrating. Classifiers remove larger rocks and debris, allowing you to focus your panning efforts on the finer, more concentrated material, significantly increasing your chances of success and reducing your work.

4. What are some common mistakes beginners make with their equipment?

Answer: Common mistakes include digging too fast, not classifying material properly, panning too aggressively (washing gold away), not learning to identify gold versus other shiny minerals (like pyrite), and not carrying enough water or being in a location with sufficient water flow.

Conclusion

Embarking on your gold mining adventure is exciting and can be very productive with the right beginner-friendly equipment. You don't need to break the bank or become an expert overnight. By focusing on the essentials—a reliable gold pan, efficient classifiers, a handy snuffer bottle, and sturdy digging tools—you build a solid foundation. These proven tools, honed by generations of prospectors, allow you to experience the thrill of searching for gold responsibly and effectively. Remember to always prioritize safety, respect the environment by following local guidelines and Leave No Trace principles, and, most importantly, be patient and enjoy the process. Each pan of gravel, each fleck of gold you might find, is a step forward in your prospecting journey.

Once you've mastered the basics with your core kit, you might want to consider equipment that allows you to process more material or explore different types of gold deposits. These are not strictly essential for your very first outing, but they are common next steps for a beginner looking to become more serious.

For additional information going beyond the bare basics and learning about useful gadgets and tools, additional information may be found in the source document at:

<https://friskmode.com/gold-mining-equipment-beginners/>

April 2026 Special Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	Member's Meeting 6:00 PM	8	9	10	11
BRUISER Claims 8:00 AM	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	Business Meeting 6:30 PM	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2026 Special Events

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	Member's Meeting 6:00 PM	6	7	8	SNOOZIN Claims 8:00 AM
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	Business Meeting 6:30 PM	20	21	22	23
24	MEMORIAL DAY	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Editor's Note

I always enjoyed “rockhounding,” so moving into gold prospecting was an easy transition. However, I had no idea what equipment was needed to find that shiny yellow stuff. After months of research and experimenting with different types of equipment, I quickly realized it was the companies selling prospecting equipment that are getting rich, rather than the vast majority of part-time prospectors who dream of finding gold like they do on reality shows like “Gold Rush.” The story on [page 16](#) is provided to assist our new members with information (and references) on the basic, equipment needed for prospecting—without breaking the bank.



Ray Darragh, DGD Gazette
Editor

I always appreciate feedback from members. If you would like to contribute a story to share with club members, or would like to see specific information in the Gazette, please contact me at DGDGazette51@gmail.com.

“May you always find yellow in the bottom of your pan”



The Desert Gold Diggers Gazette is published as a service to the members of Desert Gold Diggers Inc. Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the management and its members and neither the Desert Gold Diggers, its Board, nor the editor of this publication assume any liability for damages resulting from the use of Gazette information and club maps. There are risks associated with prospecting and the Desert Gold Diggers membership application states:

“I acknowledge that prospecting and prospecting locations can be dangerous with numerous natural and artificial hazards. By signing up, as a member of the Desert Gold Diggers Inc., I, my spouse, my family, and/or my guests agree to release the Desert Gold Diggers Inc., their officers or assignees, and/or property owner(s) from any liability incurred during prospecting operations/outings. I further agree to have any guests accompanying me to one of the clubs claims on a private outing, to sign a club waiver prior to the outing.”

The Desert Gold Diggers Board encourages submissions of articles from club members about prospecting or mining, as well as opinion pieces or the sale of items. All submissions will be reviewed and approved by the Board prior to inclusion in the Gazette.