

DO IT WITH JEWELER'S TOOLS

Let us reassure those of you without lapidary skills that a lapidary studio is not a necessity for this technique. Many jewelers are likely to have most of the very basic and inexpensive tools on hand. Having access to traditional lapidary equipment is always a plus for the occasional touch-up, but you don't have to have it.

■ **Flex Shaft** Most jewelers already own a flex shaft — the mainstay for texturing or carving a cabochon. Although you can master this technique holding the flex shaft in your hand, you'll learn faster and more easily if you can work with a fixed rather than a flexible shaft because this will leave you with both hands free. You'll have more control manipulating the stone and you'll be able to add water easily as necessary. This arrangement will also throw the cutting debris and water away from your face.

Some carvers prefer to support the cabochon with their fingers while others prefer to mount the cabochon on a dop-stick for more control. Experiment with both to determine which method works best for you. Hold the speed control foot pedal to a medium speed to make smooth, controlled cuts.

■ **Cutting Tools** Most jewelers have silicon carbide separating discs around their workshops for metalwork that can also be used on softer stones. However, these discs are brittle and wear out quickly, so a better choice is diamond, especially on harder stones. Diamond discs may



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Tom built this flex shaft fixture to fit our #30 handpiece.

A set of fine detail diamond burs.

Diamond drills and core drills.
Silicon carbide and diamond separating discs.

be purchased individually or in sets from most jewelry suppliers.

We suggest you begin with an inexpensive set of assorted shapes for experimenting, then purchase additional tools as you figure out your preferences. You'll build up the perfect assortment over time.

