

# CALIFORNIA'S

## State Rock is Asbestos?

### WHAT IS SERPENTINE?

Serpentine is a subgroup of rock minerals. The mixture of various minerals makes a pattern that resembles snakeskin, hence the general name Serpentinite.



The California-native plant Raven's Manzanita, which has evolved to depend on serpentine-rich soils and can only be found in a handful of spots in Northern California.



Serpentine is also very good at natural carbon sequestration, so much so that the United States Geological Survey is studying it as a top natural method with which to capture and store excess carbon dioxide on the planet and combat climate change.

But Serpentine can contain chrysotile asbestos, which can cause a wide variety of breathing diseases, including cancer.



### IS SERPENTINE DANGEROUS?



As with most asbestos deposits, you don't have to worry about walking near or even handling Serpentine in solid form when it is undisturbed.



When it's mined and processed, however, asbestos becomes 'friable', meaning it breaks up into fibers that become airborne.



People who lived near quarries where industry mined asbestos had higher rates of asbestos-related illnesses like cancer, even if they never stepped foot in the mine.

Serpentinite was also a huge player in California's famous Gold Rush, as it was particularly plentiful in the same places where gold was found in California and is still used to this day as a potential indicator of gold deposits.



### IS SERPENTINE STILL THE STATE ROCK OF CALIFORNIA?



Since 1989, the U.S. EPA has phased out active asbestos mining in the U.S., so California's Serpentine deposits generally pose no danger.



In 2009, California State Senator Gloria Romero (East LA) sponsored SB 624 to remove serpentine as California's state rock in 2009. The bill passed the CA Senate, but subsequently died in the House and never became law.

To learn more, [click here](#) →