

Lloyd Dunnavant called Packard Stamp and Rock shop in Midlothian (794-5538).

Rip Ford at www.daa.com in Richmond said "Flint (more commonly referenced as "chert" in the geological literature) is abundant in various limestones found WEST of the Blue Ridge (west of Afton Mountain). It typically occurs as black layers or lenses that are parallel to the layers of limestone. I cannot think of a specific location where you would be guaranteed to find a significant amount of it, but a little backroad exploration should yield enough.

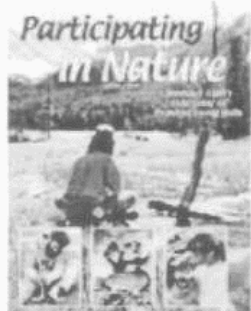
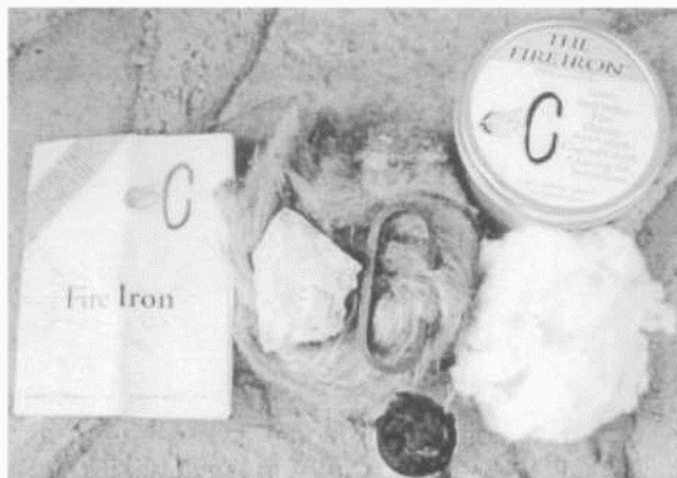
Thanks to Dan Edwards (Troop 760) who sent the best link: www.grannysstore.com/Wilderness_Survival/flintandsteel.htm (PO Box 684, Silver Star, MT 59751, 406-287-3605)

Fire Iron Flint & Steel Kits for Primitive Fire Making

Although I often use a bowdrill or handdrill to start fires on primitive camping trips, I virtually always bring along a good flint & steel kit too. Flint & steel kits are reasonably compact, light-weight and very reliable.

A spark is created by striking the steel down across the sharp edge of a flint or quartz rock. The rock shears off tiny flakes of metal. The shearing, ripping action heats up the flecks of metal so much that they catch fire. The sparks are literally globs of flying, molten metal.

The magnesium and steel kits sold at many camping stores are often called "flint & steel", but they are significantly different. First, you shave off flakes of magnesium into a pile in your tinder, then you strike a steel scraper across a "flint rod" which is typically embedded in one side of the magnesium bar. The "flint rod" is made from misch metal, which is made from rare earth elements. Sparks from the misch metal ignites the magnesium, which burns hot and ignites the tinder.



To nurture a tiny flint and steel spark into a fire, the spark is first caught on a material called char cloth. Char cloth is usually made from 100% cotton material that has been previously charred in the fire and smothered. This partially burned material is easily re-ignited by the tiny spark. The cloth is then transferred to a tinder bundle and blown into flame.

To make a flint and steel fire, first practice making sparks. These instructions are for right-handers. The opposite works for lefties: Hold the spark rock in your left hand so that a sharp edge is laying horizontally and facing your right hand. Hold the striker vertically in your right hand and practice taking one good deliberate stroke at a time. Bring the striker nearly straight down so that the sharp edge of the stone shaves off microscopic bits of metal. Following through with long strokes seems to help. When you get good sparks then you are ready for the char cloth. To catch the sparks, hold a piece of char cloth the size of a postage-stamp on top of the rock with your thumb. Hold it as close as possible to the edge without interfering with the striker.

When a spark catches on the cloth and glows cherry red, blow gently to help it spread. Next, place it in the tinder bundle and blow it into flame. Be sure and put your flint and steel kit in a safe place as soon as you have your spark.

Each flint & steel kit includes **a steel, a flint rock, char cloth, raw cotton, tinder and instructions**. The steel strikers are made entirely of high carbon steel and hardened all the way through, this way they last until there is no more striker left. The kits come in a **round metal container**. Manufactured by enterprising Eagle Scouts Kristopher Goodrich and Rob Hogg. (They are in college now.) Please see the book Participating in Nature for additional instructions.

One Fire Iron Flint & Steel Kit \$16.00

Set of 4 Extra Flint Rocks \$3.00

Participating in Nature: Thomas J. Elpel's Field Guide to Primitive Living Skills \$25.00