

= Raskovnik =

The raskovnik or razkovniche ( Serbian Cyrillic and Macedonian : ????????? , Bulgarian : ????????? , pronounced [ rʲsʲkʲvɐnʲɪtʲ ] , Russian : ?????? @-@ ????? , Polish : rozryw ) is a magical herb in Slavic ( Bosnian , Bulgarian , Croatian , Macedonian , Montenegrin , Serbian , Slovene , Russian ) and Romanian ( iarba fiarelor ) mythology . According to lore , the raskovnik has the magical property to unlock or uncover anything that is locked or closed . However , legends claim it is notoriously difficult to recognize the herb , and reputedly only certain chthonic animals are able to identify it .

= = Names = =

The herb is known by a multitude of names among the South Slavs , and the names vary significantly by region . While razkovniche and raskovnik are the customary names in Bulgarian and Serbian respectively and the root is also preserved in the Leskovac dialect as raskov , in some parts of Macedonia it is known as e? trava ( " hedgehog grass " ) . In the vicinity of Bar ( southeastern Montenegro ) , the term is demir @-@ bozan , a Turkish borrowing meaning " iron breaker " . In Syrmia , the plant is referred to as ?purgasta trava ( a hapax legomenon ) , in Slavonia it is known as zemaljski ključ ( " earth key " ) , and in Slovenia 's Savinja Valley as mavri?in koren ( " rainbow root " ) .

= = Description and properties = =

Traditionally , it is considered that few people , if any , could actually recognize the herb . However , in Bulgarian sources the raskovnik is sometimes described as a grass resembling a four @-@ leaf clover . It grows in meadows and may be picked either while green and blooming or in hay , when it is already dry . While it is not necessarily rare , nor does it thrive only in remote locations , it is nevertheless impossible to recognize by the uninitiated . In the words of Serbian linguist and folklorist Vuk Stefanovi? Karadži? , ? It is some ( may be imaginary ) grass for which it is thought that thanks to it ( when brushed by it ) every lock and every other closure would open by itself . ?

According to the legend , the raskovnik could unlock any gate or padlock , regardless of its size , material or key . It could also uncover treasures buried in the ground : in Bulgarian beliefs , it could split the ground at the place where a treasure lay so that people could locate it . In some regions of Serbia , the treasure itself was a black man in chains who requested that a raskovnik be brought to him . The raskovnik would break the chains and the man would disappear into the ground to be replaced by a cauldron filled with gold coins . Other supernatural properties attributed to the herb by Bulgarians include the alchemic ability to transmute iron into gold , the more general ability to make the one who picked it forever happy or wealthy . In some interpretations , the raskovnik is a wonderful plant that makes true whatever its owner desires .

= = Obtainment = =

The raskovnik is believed to have been sought after by treasure hunters , sorcerers and herbalists who desired its magic powers for personal benefit . In Serbia , it was believed that there exist certain treasures , such as the Treasure of Tsar Radovan , which could not be unlocked in any other way but employing a raskovnik .

As , according to Bulgarian mythology and some other traditions , tortoises were the only beings who knew the appearance of the herb and the location where it grows , such people would try to obtain the raskovnik by deceiving a tortoise . They would find a tortoise nesting site and hem it in with a fence while the tortoise is away . When it returns , the tortoise would be unable to access its eggs , so it would return with a raskovnik in order to breach the fence . Thus , the tortoise would reveal the herb and people would acquire it from the tortoise , which does not need it anymore .

While the tricking of a tortoise was the most popular method in Bulgarian mythology , in Dalmatia

the legend refers to snakes , and among Serbs another version involves the locking of young hedgehogs in a box for their mother to unlock . In Serbia , one would also have to be quick to take the raskovnik , as the hedgehog would swallow it after use . In any case , turtles , snakes and hedgehogs are all animals with chthonic characteristics which were often variously associated with the underworld in South Slavic tradition .

Karadžić also mentions another Serbian method to obtain the raskovnik . He recorded a story from the town of Zemun about a merchant who desired to find the herb . The merchant locked an old woman into leg irons and let her wander in a field during the night ; if the irons unlocked by themselves at a certain place , that would be a place where the raskovnik grows .

= = Metaphoric use = =

The legendary herb has entered the modern Bulgarian vocabulary as a metaphor for a magic key or a panacea in the wider sense . The phrase " to find the razkovniche " ( " ? ?? ?????? ????????????? ? ? da namerish razkovnicheto ? ) means to find the solution to a certain problem , usually a complex or difficult one . Razkovniche is also the common Bulgarian name for the plant European waterclover ( *Marsilea quadrifolia* ) which , in its appearance , has many similarities with the descriptions of the mythical raskovnik . In eastern Serbia , raskovnik also refers to a specific plant used in vernacular medicine , namely *Laserpitium siler* .