

# Herbs Make Scents



THE HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
VOLUME XLIV, NUMBER 3

SOUTH TEXAS UNIT  
MARCH 2021

Co-Editors Linda Alderman ([ewalderman@comcast.net](mailto:ewalderman@comcast.net)) & Janice Freeman ([jkfreesmanHouStu@outlook.com](mailto:jkfreesmanHouStu@outlook.com))

## March 2021 Calendar

All in-person **Day and Evening Meetings** are cancelled until further notice!!!!

**Mar 12**, Friday Deadline

Last day to order from the **Pioneer Unit Plant** sale. See details in newsletter.

**Mar 17**, Wed. at 7:00 pm

**Pearls for the Pandemic: Zoom Meeting** - "*Herbal Ways of Ireland - Springtime Herbs of the Druids, the Fairies, and the Saints*" presented by **Irish Storyteller Jane McDaniel**. For more information see page 3. Follow our Facebook page and check email for additional information.

**Mar 27**, Sun. at 7:00 pm

**Full Moon Ramble** – A Zoom gathering for Members only

## April 2021 Calendar

**April 21**, Wed. at 7:00 pm

**Pearls for the Pandemic: Zoom Meeting** - "*Hold the Phone! Tips for Photographing Native Plants and Wildlife with Your Smartphone*" presented by **Lauren Simpson**, creator of **St. Julien's Crossing Wildlife Habitat** in Houston, Texas.

**Newsletter deadline: the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month is strictly enforced**  
(April editor **Janice Freeman**)

## March Birth Flower - Water Lily



Photo courtesy of Petal Talk

"**Water lily**, (family Nymphaeaceae), any of 58 species in 6 genera of freshwater plants native to the temperate and tropical parts of the world. Most species of water lilies have rounded variously notched, waxy coated leaves on long stalks that contain many air spaces and float in quiet fresh water habitats. The stalks arise from thick, fleshy, creeping underwater stems that are buried in the mud. The showy, fragrant solitary flowers are borne at or above the water surface on long stalks that are attached to the underground stems. Each cuplike flower has a spiral arrangement of its numerous petals." - *The editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*

## Happy Birthday!

Susan Wood (3/1)  
Lois Jean Howard (3/23)

Joan Jordan (3/11)  
Linda Alderman (3/28)



## Chairman's Corner

I hope that all of you have survived these last few crazy weeks. With almost a week of freezing temperatures, burst pipes and dead plants on top of Covid, many of us are at the breaking point. Hang in there; if I know anything, it's that Spring will come. This month we have included a couple of articles to help you mitigate freeze damaged plants. I hope you find the articles helpful.

The Pioneer Unit Plant Sale is happening! As members of the South Texas Unit, we are invited to shop their great selection of plants and herbal items from the Thyme Well Spent Shoppe. If you can, place an order (snail mail and a check), and get to Festival Hill in Round Top to pick it up, please do it! I think they have a wonderful selection of herbs and plants, and they have Red-Stemmed Apple Mint which is hard to find. We use this variety of mint in our Texas Herb Tea blend, which we should be able to make and sell this Fall for Herb Fair. I placed my order last week, the deadline for placing orders is March 12.

The Scholarship committee is still hard at work. After revamping our scholarship criteria, we will send notices to around 40 colleges and universities here in Texas. Many thanks go to **Catherine O'Brien, Donna Wheeler, Sara Diaz and Dena Yanowski** for their hard work.

We are closer to officially having use of a garden bed at the Westbury Community Garden. The bed is being cleaned (thank you Debbie Lancaster) and readied for a load of garden soil and compost from Danny Wilson at Farm Dirt. I plan on using the survey results to call people who might want to work down there in the near future. If you would like to help, and did not sign up on the survey, give me a call.

Lastly, you will absolutely NOT WANT TO MISS OUR MARCH PEARLS FOR THE PANDEMIC!!! What better way to spend St. Patrick's Day and get a healthy dose of the "spirit o' the green!"

Until next month,

**Julie Fordes**  
**Unit Chair**



## Pioneer Unit of the Herb Society of America Plant and Gift Sale

-You must **order and prepay** for plants & Thyme Well Spent Shop items **before March 12th**

-**Pick up** orders at Festival Hill in Round Top at a pre-arranged time **between Thursday, March 18th and Saturday morning, March 20th.**

Here is the Pioneer Unit website for placing your order: <http://www.herbsocietypioneer.org> Use the Plant and Gift Sale link on the main menu.

Print and fill out the order forms. Checks only! Mail orders to Susan Yancey, as listed on plant sale order form.

Social distancing & masks will be used.



**Announcing Our March 17 “Care and Share”  
Pearls for the Pandemic Program**

***“Herbal Ways of Ireland -  
Springtime Herbs of the Druids,  
the Fairies and the Saints”***



***Celebrate St. Patrick’s Day with Us!  
Spend A Magical Hour with Irish Storyteller***

***Jane McDaniel***

**<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85083837173>**



## **Horticultural Freeze Recovery**

From a Facebook post by Randy Lemmon of News Radio 740 KTRH

*Ed. note:* Excerpts taken assume there will be no future freeze this season

1. If it's crispy and brown, cut it back to green wood. Hibiscus, lantana, hamelia and other perennials are great examples.
2. If you cut a brown-and-crispy plant to the ground and see no sign of green, but the root system seems to be firmly locked in, consider leaving it alone to see if it comes back from that root system. If, however, the root system moves around easily — like a car's stick shift — it's dead. You can remove the whole thing.
3. If it's mushy, gushy, ooey or gooey, get rid of it! Cut it out, remove it--do whatever it takes to get the nasty stuff out of there. If you cut all the spongy parts away from tropicals like bananas or split-leaf philodendrons, you'll likely be left with just a tiny bit of green material near the ground. But you really need to get the squishy stuff out, because it could harbor fungal diseases that will be pulled into the remaining plant.
4. If a palm frond (those of queen palms are good examples) is drooping over, cut it out or back. If a palm frond is standing up, leave it alone. After the January 2010 freeze, we had to wait months before we knew if some palms were coming back. The only true way to determine if a palm is dead is to examine the inside of the crown, where new growth emerges. But most of us don't have equipment or ladders tall enough to do such visual observations. I can assure you that any of the soft-trunked palms (Queen Palm is the perfect example) that weren't wrapped at all [prior to the freeze] are not going to make it. They can barely handle a few hours at 20 degrees and in most of the area we had something like 22 cumulative hours below 20 degrees.
5. On palms small enough to get to the fronds (a dwarf pygmy date palm is an example), pull on those in the interior to see if they stay attached. If they easily slide out, the plant is dead. If they hold tight, the plant may still be alive, but you will have to wait and see.
6. If you feel confident that we'll get no more hard freezes through mid-February, it's time to "scalp" the yard. Essentially, you'll try to vacuum up any dead grass so live roots are open to air, sunshine, water and fertilizer. Scalping is done by mowing with the mower deck lowered a notch or two. Years ago, a scalping would mean lowering the mower by 2-4 notches. These days, though, we know it's better to give the lawn more of a "haircut." Otherwise, just rake out as much debris as possible and skip the mowing. As you might suspect, another hard freeze could actually kill a scalped St. Augustine lawn.
7. If you think your St. Augustine lawn has a lot of thatch built up, don't mechanically de-thatch--give it a haircut instead. There are products--essentially anything containing humus or humates, molasses, and now newer products like the trace mineral/trace elements in the products from Nature's Way, Soil Mender and Azomite. Any of these products will help break down the thatch.
8. Citrus Care Post Freeze--If you were able to salvage the trunks of the tropical fruits like Citrus, Avocado and Papaya, by insane trunk wrapping, and saving the graft (mostly related to the citrus) then we will need to prune them back as early as this Saturday, even if they were pruned in early February as we encouraged on GardenLine.

Please share this information with friends and neighbors, and encourage them to tune in GardenLine each weekend to learn more about recovering from extreme weather and then ultimately succeeding with all types of gardening along the Gulf Coast. That's also why my new book, *New Decade Gardening –A Gulf Coast Guide* is going to be necessary for the next many months. It's available at every nursery, garden center, feed store and Ace Hardware store you hear me bragging about each weekend on the show. Get hooked up with GardenLine on Facebook, too. We post timely information there on a regular basis.



## Member Concerns



Fatma Ozgel and family have been affected by COVID

## Every Garden Needs a Protector, Who's Keeping Watch in Yours?



From an ash tree cavity, this squirrel is protecting Susan Wood's garden.

*Photo courtesy of Susan Wood*

## All About Basil

Texas A&M  
AgriLife Home  
Grown Lecture Series



A free on-line presentation through [eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/home-grown-lecture-series-tickets-131086488215?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch) on **March 18, 2021 10-11:00 a.m.**

Here is the link to register.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/home-grown-lecture-series-tickets-131086488215?aff=ebdssbonlinesearch>



**You shop. Amazon gives.**

An AmazonSmile account has been set up for the South Texas Unit. Be sure to sign up for [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) and select the South Texas unit as described below. Each quarter the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible items to our unit.

The shopping experience is the same as shopping through amazon.com with the added benefit the foundation will donate to our organization.

### Five Easy Steps to Support the South Texas Unit

1. Go to smile.amazon.com
2. No account? Create one! Have an account? Sign in.
3. Select charitable organization. Found near the top of the smile.amazon.com home page.
4. Type in Herb Society South Texas Unit and click Search. Once the name comes up hit Select.
5. Enjoy shopping!

Questions? Problems? Contact Maria Treviño at [maria@burger.com](mailto:maria@burger.com)



## Janice Freeman

Houston, TX

Member since 2017

Board Member 2018

Publications/Newsletter Standing Committee:  
Co-editor of The South Texas Unit's **Herbs Make Scents** Newsletter and editor of MailChimp messages

The smell of lemon thyme is so wonderful; it is my favorite herb for use in cooking. I go to extraordinary lengths to harvest, dry and pull the tiny leaves from the stem just to have a stem-free jar of lemon thyme handy at all times in the pantry! My membership interests are herbal crafting, culinary, gardening and stitchery. I also like to photograph herbs and other garden related plants, bugs, birds, butterflies and art. Some of these photos appear in the STU newsletter and announcements.

Prior to becoming a STU member, I attended Herb Day and Herb Fair. I marveled at how well these events were orchestrated and I returned year after year to enjoy the educational presentations, herbal crafts, delicious breads, jellies, fresh herbs, books and more. I recognized then as I do now that leadership, dedication and active member participation is integral for an educational organization to thrive and accomplish goals, wonderful programs and events. My favorite pleasure at these events was the joy I witnessed and the excitement I felt as members shared their love of herbs with each other and with the public. As a result, I wanted to join in the joy and excitement.

Upon retiring in 2017 from a career as an oncology nurse I set out to become a member of the STU. Since joining I have a small herb garden and wonderful herb friends. **Julie Fordes** became a STU member about the same time as I did. Together we “hit the ground running” and chaired the 2018 Herb Fair. I would say we are still running.



Janice shares a photo of her garden on a sunny day!

I volunteer to co-edit the STU electronic newsletter with **Linda Alderman**. In this “behind the scene” role we coordinate, edit, design and deliver our newsletter to members and guests. The email cover to the newsletter and other announcements such as Herb Fair and Herb Day are designed and distributed by me using an email marketing tool called MailChimp. I also work with **Karen Cottingham**, STU Program Chair with the construction of the Pearls for the Pandemic announcements and with Julie Fordes, STU Chairperson with the construction and distribution of other STU announcements.

As always, I am looking forward to Herb Fair and Herb Day and having the opportunity to share “herb joy & excitement” with others.



## Remembering Hermann Park Garden Center and Fragrant Garden.... Archival Materials

Janice Stuff

Meetings, programs, events, and public gardening of The Herb Society of America, South Texas Unit were for decades held in two beautiful structures and areas: the Houston Garden Center and the Fragrant Garden, both located in Hermann Park. The Houston Garden Center, a beautiful white brick Greek revival-inspired structure, housed a main auditorium meeting hall, kitchen, secondary meeting rooms, and administrative offices.

The Fragrant Garden, at the western edge of the Rose Garden, was comprised of 12 different beds with an extensive collection of herbs and related trees and plants. STU members maintained the garden; our unit purchased plants and covered all additional expenses. Most of the beds were elevated by design to allow access for wheelchair bound or blind people to easily reach out and touch the herbs. It also allowed for easier garden maintenance while standing upright. The main raised garden beds had labels in both English and Braille. In 2013, the building and Fragrant Garden were removed for construction of Hermann Park Conservancy's new McGovern Centennial Gardens and Cherie Flores Pavilion which opened in 2014.

During the transition, STU Chair **Martha Burg** obtained permission from the Houston Parks and Recreation Department staff to remove some of the bricks from both structures. Our members were each gifted with two bricks as a souvenir for maintaining the Fragrant Garden for over forty years and our events held in the building.

Recently, Martha arranged to send a few bricks from these structures to The Herb Society of America headquarters



**Houston Garden Center and Fragrant Garden, Hermann Park circa 1998**  
*Photos courtesy of STU Archives*

“The Vineyard House” in Kirtland, Ohio. These bricks from our Fragrant Garden and Houston Garden Center building will be incorporated in The Society archives and/or placed in the beautiful beds surrounding our headquarters.



## February Freeze Report

*Susan Gail Wood*

Our gardens suffered the coldest temperatures ever recorded for Houston during several consecutive below-freezing days mid-February this year. How did your garden fare? What plants survived and what plants froze? What did you do to help protect your herbs and did it make any difference?

In my garden I covered a large planter full of Huntington blue prostrate rosemary with a snugly tied sheet. It survived but the black and blue ornamental salvia in same container froze. An uncovered container with a small, upright rosemary, ashwagandha and dill seedlings had only the dill still looking good. An upright rosemary, Tuscan blue, uncovered in the ground survived. A large, covered container revealed perky culinary Berggarten

sage, but badly frozen butterfly weed. The same sage planted in the ground nearby with a mulch of leaves covering it survived too. Covered containers with lemon thyme and Dittany of Crete survived. A large, covered container of Cleopatra oregano looks as if she just bit an asp. I am hoping she survives, and she probably will.

All my gingers are brown or mushy as expected. I anticipate the shell, variegated shell, butterfly, spiral, hidden, and false cardamon gingers will spring forth from their roots once the weather warms. There was no use covering them as they were to succumb to even a brief time of freezing weather. If you have never grown butterfly ginger, try it – the blooms have a heavenly fragrance somewhere between jasmine and honeysuckle.

My lemon and lime trees are dicey; too soon to tell if they will recover. My avocado trees have brown leaves drooping sadly, ready to fall off soon. Such a shame as one was covered with blooms just before the freeze. The banana trees have fallen over into a mushy mess. I will remove the mushy parts now back almost to green stalk. Then use a serrated knife to cut the stalk horizontally back to green once it warms. The peach tree is probably OK; the jury is still out on the dwarf pomegranate. My three bay trees are standing 15 feet tall without any signs of distress. Two of them either side of the Owari Satsuma (Mandarin) orange tree protected that citrus from extensive damage.

Most of my rose bushes look good. I am ready to prune them – except for the antique climbing roses that wait to be pruned until after spring blooms. Vetiver is as indestructible as aspidistra, the “cast iron plant”. Wood violets are as happy as ever.

My biggest surprise was the survival of lemon balm in a container with Australian tree fern in the center. I double wrapped it. The tree fern does not look good, but the lemon balm is green, cheerful, and ready to make into a cup of soothing herbal tea.

All my aloes and succulents were safely tucked in the garage with a space heater before the coldest nights; along with dozens of other tender plants in containers large and small. These will travel just outside the garage to live once it warms up until all danger of frost passes. I am not carting those to their places in the garden until I am sure they can stay put again until next year’s threat of freezing weather returns. I move containers of tropical plants into my home by late November each year. They stay inside until early April, and then go to shady parts of the backyard garden. I have a dozen palm trees, now eight feet tall, that I grew from seed. They, along with lots of sansevieria (snake plants) and spathiphyllum (peace lilies) purify the air with extra oxygen. To stay healthy, they all rotate vacationing outside in the warm months until time to return for next year’s jungle décor.



## February Freeze Report – continued

Julie Fordes

Cleaning up our herb beds and gardens will be an on-going project I am afraid. I know that many of us are not able to do the heavy pruning and other things that may be needed to get ready for spring. If you need help cleaning up your gardens after the freeze, let me know. Likewise, if you have some time to help other members get their gardens in shape, call or email me. I, for one, am willing to donate some labor for the cause. Please don't be shy, call for help if you need it!

### Slow Down and...



Photo Courtesy of Catherine O'Brien

“I think luxury is a matter not of all the things you have, but of all the things you can afford to do without.”

--Pico Iyer

...Savor the Day

### Ever wonder what to do in your Garden in March?



Visit the South Texas Unit Website for a Monthly “To Do” List !



Stock image courtesy of the Graphics Fairy



## Herb of the Month: Heartsease/Wild Pansy

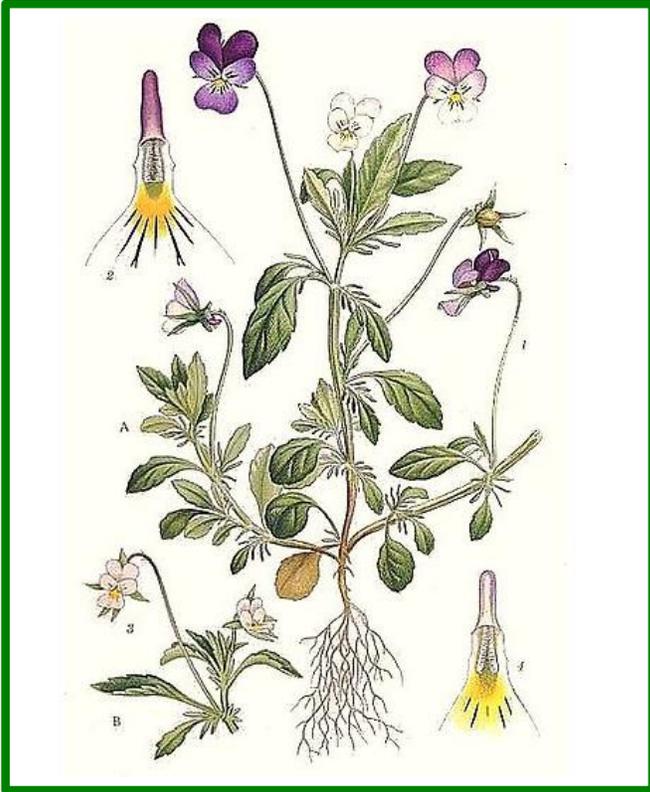
Lucinda Kontos

**Scientific name:** *Viola tricolor*

**Higher Classification:** Violet

**Rank:** Species

**Family:** Violaceae



Courtesy of Wikipedia

This much-loved herb has many names, faces and legends. Wild pansy (*Viola tricolor*), also known as heartsease, Heart's ease, Heart's delight, Johnny Jump up, Tickle-me fancy, Jack-Jump-Up-and-Kiss-me, Come-and-Cuddle-Me, Three Faces in a Hood, Love-in-Idleness, or Pink of My John, is a common European wild flower growing as an annual or short-lived perennial. It is the progenitor of the cultivated pansy, and is therefore sometimes called wild pansy.

**Growing Conditions** *Viola tricolor* grows up to 8 inches by 8 inches. The flower can be purple, blue, yellow or white. It is noted for attracting wildlife. It is not frost tender and flowers from April to September; the seeds ripen from June to September. The species is hermaphrodite (has both

male and female organs) and is pollinated by bees. The plant is self-fertile. It can produce up to 50 seeds at a time.

The wild pansy does well in sandy, medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils but prefers well-drained soil. It can grow in semi-shade (light woodland) or no shade. It prefers moist soil-neutral and acid are the best pH for it.

### Folklore

The pansy flower symbolizes the love or admiration of one person for another. The word pansy is from the verb *pensee*, in French, meaning to think. According to Roman mythology, the wild pansy turned into the Love-in-idleness as Cupid shot one of his arrows at the imperial votaress, but missed and instead struck it. As Cupid is the god of desire, affection and erotic love, the flower's juice received the trait to act as a love potion. Its name relates to the use of the flower, as it is often used for idleness or vileness acts.

According to Greek mythology, Zeus, fell in love with a young woman named Io and provoked jealousy to his wife Hera. He transformed the girl into a heifer and kept her grazing at his feet. For pity on the diet to which he submitted the beloved, he caused the earth to produce beautiful flowers that he called Io.

Another Greek legend has it that the delicate white flower were worshipped by Eros to inhibit this worship, Aphrodite colored them, which resulted in tricolor coloration.



In medieval times, prior to the Reformation, it was linked with the Virgin Mary. The colors of the heartsease, white, yellow, and purple relate to purity, joy and mourning respectively which relate in turn to the Virgin's life.

Heart's ease was formerly in much repute as a remedy for epilepsy, asthma, and numerous other complaints, and the flowers were considered cordial and good in diseases of the heart, from which may have arisen its popular name of Heartsease as much as from belief in it as a love potion. The root and seeds are also purgative, which properties as well as the expectorant action of the plant are doubtless due to the presence of the violine. [A Modern Herbal | Heartsease \(botanical.com\)](https://www.botanical.com/ModernHerbal/Heartsease.html)

It was formerly official in the United States Pharmacopoeia; it is still used here as an ointment and poultice in eczema and other skin troubles, and internally for bronchitis. Pansy leaves are used in Europe in place of litmus in acid and alkali tests.

### Culinary Uses

Heart's ease edible flowers are known for their antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and other medicinal properties. The flowers can be harvested in the spring and the petals used as a garnish for salads and other meals. Petals can also be coated in egg whites and sugar and dried to decorate desserts.

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.

## Congratulations to Sara Holland ~ Helen de Conway Little Medal



Congratulations to **Sara Holland** who was recently named the 2021 winner for The Herb Society of America's highest award, the **Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor**. Sara first started her study of herbs in Houston as a member of the South Texas Unit. Sara later moved to Wimberley, Texas over 25 years ago, and helped form the Hill Country Unit. She is also a member of the Pioneer Unit and has been an Affiliate member of the South Texas Unit since moving.

Sara is an enthusiastic supporter of the South Texas Unit and attends many of our Unit's Herb Days and Herb Fairs. Besides being active in herb societies, Sara has been an active Texas Master Gardener, where she has taught herb classes to interns and members of Master Gardeners in Travis and Hays Counties.

Last fall, Sara Holland and **Mary Doebbeling** presented the HSA Webinar "Molé, Pan, and Chapulin: Oaxacan Style." The program is based on their recent journey to Oaxaca, Mexico where they studied and used local herbs and plants. This webinar is available for viewing to HSA members on The Society's website.

Sara's 2021 award for the Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor follows the 2020 winner of the same award, our former South Texas Unit member and current affiliate member, **Lois Sutton**.

Submitted by Janice Stuff



### Meet Cassandra Hutcheson 2020 Madalene Hill Scholarship Recipient



Meet our 2020 Madalene Hill Scholarship recipient, Cassandra Hutcheson. She attended Texas Tech University and Stephen F. Austin University as an undergraduate, where she majored in Plant and Soil Science. While at Texas Tech, she conducted research on three treatments to promote germination of *Viola cornuta* seeds. She is especially interested in the field of viticulture and enology. At Texas A&M, she is pursuing graduate studies in Floriculture and will serve as a Teaching Assistant to undergraduates in Floral Designs Courses. Ultimately she will make outstanding contributions to the Floriculture Industry, as stated by her Texas Tech professor in his letter of recommendation.

Last year, we received only two applications for the scholarship, and both were graduate students, who would have been ineligible under the old guidelines. We worked hard to update the scholarship requirements to include graduate students with this worthy young lady in mind. She was kind enough to send this update on her studies, and of course a hearty "Thank You!"

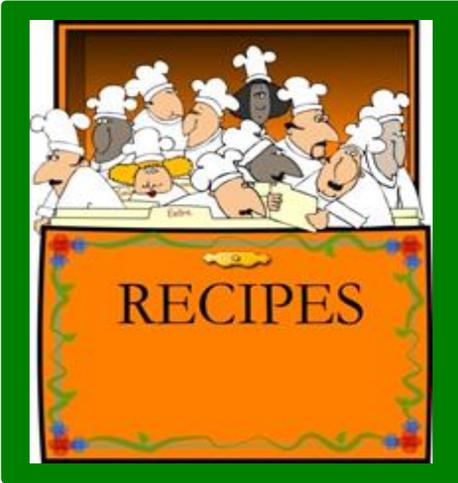
***For me, beginning graduate school at the age of 20 was a very daunting task. However, it has proven to be a rewarding and even fun experience! I finished my first semester this December, and I got to work my dream job as a floral design teaching assistant. I am currently studying for my Wine and Spirit Education certification exam to become a level 3 Sommelier. It has been hundreds of hours of studying but well worth it to become an expert in another area I am very passionate about. I like to joke that I'll eventually become an expert in a woman's 3 favorite gifts, flowers, wine, and (maybe one day) chocolate! This is a very exciting season of life for me as I work on my PhD and will be getting married soon! The Herb Society scholarship is truly a very welcome blessing.***

We are delighted to have been part of her educational journey, and we wish her continued success.





## STAY-AT-HOME RECIPES



Carolyn Kosclskey

*I Martius am! Once first, and now third!  
To lead the Year was my appointed place;  
A mortal dispossessed me by a word,  
And set there Janus with the double face.*

–Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, American poet (1807–82)

March was named for the Roman god of war, Mars, and around 700 BC in the early Roman calendar was the first month of the year. It later became the third month when January and February, previously at the end of the calendar, were moved to the first and second months around 450 BC. Important dates during the month begin with Daylight Savings Time on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The vernal equinox, when the sun is directly over the equator, is on the 20<sup>th</sup> which also marks the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere. Passover begins at sundown on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and the Paschal Full Moon, the moon that determines Easter, is on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Even though all of these calendar dates are important, most of us think of St. Patrick's Day on the 17<sup>th</sup> when we think of the month of March, along with shamrocks, the color green and the beverages and foods associated with the holiday.

### LEMON BROCCOLI RICE

#### Ingredients

Extra-virgin olive oil, for brushing skillet  
1 small or medium broccoli stalk to yield 2 cups riced  
¼ cup yellow or white onion, small dice  
1 garlic clove or to taste, minced  
2 tablespoons chopped cilantro stems, plus 1/2 cup leaves reserved and rough chopped  
1/4 teaspoon sea salt, more to taste  
freshly ground black pepper  
1/4 teaspoon cumin, more to taste  
zest and juice from one lemon  
1 cup cooked brown rice or grain of choice (warm)

#### Instructions

Remove any tough or woody parts from the broccoli stalk. Use a vegetable peeler to remove the outer skin of the stalk if it is tough. Chop the remaining stalk and the florets into 1-inch pieces. Note: It is important to have all parts of broccoli the same size before processing. Place broccoli pieces into the processor and pulse until it is broken up into tiny rice-sized pieces. This should yield about 2 cups of “riced” broccoli.



Brush a nonstick skillet with the olive oil and heat at medium low. Add the riced broccoli, onion, garlic, cilantro stems, salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Cook and stir a few minutes until lightly warmed but still bright green. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the cumin, lime or lemon zest, and a squeeze of lime or lemon juice. Stir in the brown rice or your grain of choice and return to stove. When heated season to taste and serve sprinkled with reserved cilantro leaves.

Note: riced broccoli may be substituted in other recipes calling for riced cauliflower.

*Inspired from [www.loveandlemons.com/broccoli-rice](http://www.loveandlemons.com/broccoli-rice)*

## GREEN BEER AND OTHER BEVERAGES

If you would like to add a “green” adult beverage to your celebration, the recommended way is to stir in a few drops of green food coloring. If the beverage is of a pale yellow color such as Pilsner or a white wine, the suggestion is to stir in a few drops of blue food coloring to obtain a vibrant emerald green color. [This would also work with other foods such as oatmeal, scrambled eggs, pancakes or waffles, vanilla custard, whipped cream or toppings, etc.]

**Sláinte!**

As we progress into springtime of this year remember the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans theme of making “every bite count” with nutrient-dense foods and beverages, selecting a variety of foods from each group and portion control.

The April Stay-At-Home Recipe section will feature Spring recipes. Readers enjoy personal comments regarding the origin of the recipe so please include that. You may submit your recipe (in a form convenient for you) to Carolyn Kosclskey at [therecipeladycollection@gmail.com](mailto:therecipeladycollection@gmail.com).



Stock image courtesy of the Graphics Fairy



# Raskovnik: The Magical "Four-Leaf Clover" from Slavic Mythology

*Karen Cottingham*



**The hedgehog, the tortoise, and the magical herb, Raskovnik. The beautiful "water shamrock" (lower left) was photographed by K. K. Marais in the Fern Room of the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, St. Paul, Minnesota.**

*"Did the fairies ever whisper in your ear that a four-leaf clover brought good luck to the finder?"*

In that sincere question, posed so sweetly by an 11-year-old girl in an 1877 letter, we can all recognize a universal hope - for good fortune, of course, but also for a little magic in our lives.

I don't know how the editor of St. Nicholas Magazine responded, but I hope he answered, "Yes, of course, dear." We all need to believe in magic.

A powerful magic, like the mythical force within a little plant with four leaves.

Depending on when and where a person lived, a four-leaf clover could have marked the spot where fairies congregated, promoted the New Jersey Lottery, or warned of evil spirits lurking about.



The uplifting emblem of the 4-H youth organization - the four leaves representing "head, heart, hands, and health"- was once "gathered at night-time during the full moon by sorceresses" casting their spells.

Elon Musk chose the four-leaf clover for his SpaceX mission patches, and it's the good luck emblem on Alfa Romeo high performance racing cars. In simpler times, if a four-leaf clover was secretly placed in a young woman's shoe, she would marry the first man she met that day. And when placed on the chest of a changeling, the real child who had been stolen by the pixies would be returned to the rightful parents.

We've all heard since childhood how the four-leaf clover brings the finder "The Luck O' the Irish", but the legendary powers of Raskovnik, the "Magic Herb" of the Slavs, are not so well-known. Read on, and then add it to your collection of magic herbs... just in case the need ever arises.

Ancient Slavic legends tell of the powerful four-leaved Raskovnik, able to locate buried treasure and to unlock anything without a key. Raskovnik was described as resembling a four-leaf clover; but strangely, it was impossible for humans to recognize. Maddening, since there was always a lost treasure to find or a locked door to open!

But in the magical world of folklore, unusual solutions always seem to present themselves.

In one Serbian legend, for example, a merchant who wanted the herb for himself locked an old woman into leg irons. All night long she wandered in a field. Suddenly, the irons unlocked themselves, revealing the exact spot where the elusive Raskovnik grew. A clever merchant, I suppose, but a bit callous, don't you think?



**"Old Woman in the Field" by Vasily Maximov, 1891, next to a 13th -14th c. iron skeleton key. The "Magic Herb" on the right, is known as the "Earth Key" in Slavonia.**

Certain animals could also help; you just had to know how to trick them!

Take the hedgehog, for example, one of the few animals in Slavic folklore capable of identifying the legendary herb. If you lock a family of young hedgehogs in a box, the mother hedgehog will simply find a Raskovnik, unlock the box, and rescue her hoglets. You have to be quick, though, and grab the "Magic Herb" before the mother hedgehog swallows it - or so the legend goes. In some areas of Macedonia, Raskovnik is also called "hedgehog" grass because of this special connection.



In Bulgarian folklore, only the tortoises know what the herb looks like and where it grows. If you need something unlocked, here's how to trick a tortoise into acting as a supernatural locksmith:

First, find a nest full of tortoise eggs. While the mother is away, build a fence around the nest. When the mother tortoise finds her nest blocked, she will return with the magic herb, open the gate, and then toss the "key" aside. You don't even have to fight her for it.

Tricking a tortoise always worked in Bulgarian mythology, but in Croatia only the snakes knew how to find the magical herb.

Bulgarian legends also reveal that Raskovnik could transmute iron into gold and split the ground at the site of buried treasure. In a Serbian variation, a man in chains, representing a demon from the Underworld, requested that Raskovnik be brought to him. The lightest brush by the leaves broke the chains; and as the demon disappeared into the ground, he was magically replaced by a cauldron filled with gold coins. "Iron-breaker," one of the many folkloric names for the magical plant, refers to this legendary event.

What exactly is this mysterious four-leaved herb? In Bulgaria, it's known as *Razkovniche*; to scientists, it's *Marsilea quadrifolia*. Other names are European water clover, water shamrock, and fern clover.

At first glance, it does kind of look like a clover, but it's actually a fern that grows in shallow water or wet, marshy areas. *Marsilea* is a genus of approximately 65 species of aquatic ferns native to central and southern Europe, Afghanistan, Southwest India, China, and Japan. In some areas, the plant is used to treat snakebites and abscesses.

Varieties of *Marsilea* have been well established in the Northeastern United States for over 100 years and are popular plants for ponds and aquariums. Ironically, in some areas, the plant is considered invasive; in others, it is listed as endangered.



**A closer look at the clover of Celtic folklore and the Slavic Razkovniche reveals two completely different plants. European water clover (*Marsilea quadrifolia*) on the right, compared with the more familiar Irish shamrock (*Trifolium repens*) on the left.**

The four-leaf clover of Celtic folklore is special because it's rare, occurring in about 1 in every 5,000 clovers. A typical field of clovers looks like the image above - if a four-leaf clover is present at all, it is surrounded by thousands of the normal three-leaved versions. The four-leaf anomaly is the result of a very rare genetic variant coupled with environmental influences that are not well understood.



European water clover, on the other hand, is universally four-leaved. It's not clear why this particular common and easily identified plant was believed to contain such powerful magic.

What about the hedgehogs, tortoises, and snakes of the Raskovnik legends? Why would these particular creatures have the unique power to recognize the "Magic Herb"? In the study of mythology, hedgehogs, tortoises, and snakes would all be classified as chthonic animals - meaning that they dwell in unknown, mysterious realms under the surface of the earth. Chthonic creatures not only have strange, supernatural powers, but are powerful symbols of rebirth, renewal, and transformation. Their emergence from hibernation symbolizes the victory of life over death, illumination over darkness, and good over evil.

Hedgehogs, tortoises, and snakes are often associated with the underworld in South Slavic tradition, and conversely with cleansing, healing, enlightenment, and rebirth as they return to the light. Hedgehogs in particular, are said to be the keepers of knowledge and order and are the embodiments of magical power.

Going back to the legendary herb, Raskovnik has even entered modern Bulgarian vocabulary as a metaphor for a magic key or a general panacea. The phrase "to find the razkovniche" means to find the solution to a certain problem, usually a complex or difficult one.

Raskovnik is also said to make the one who picked it forever happy and fortunate.

And in a final, lovely and simple interpretation, "the raskovnik is a wonderful plant that makes true whatever its owner desires."

May we all "find the razkovniche" and be "forever happy and fortunate."



**In Slavic mythology, the hedgehog is a chthonic animal with supernatural powers. Chthonic comes from "chthōn", which means "earth" in Greek**

The South Texas Unit is a non-profit educational organization incorporated under the State of Texas. The South Texas Unit has no paid employees. Our activities are accomplished through the efforts of our volunteers.

The Herb Society of America  
South Texas Unit  
P.O. Box 6515  
Houston, TX 77265-6515

Find our Unit on the web at:  
[www.herbsociety-stu.org](http://www.herbsociety-stu.org)



The Herb Society of America is dedicated to promoting the knowledge, use and delight of herbs through educational programs, research and sharing the knowledge of its members with the community.

