

Matrimandir

May 2021



The Garden of the Unexpected

To see a tree in full bloom is always wonderful, inspiring, – but to see a fully grown tree that has been dug up, lifted by crane, transported by lorry and planted in a new hole in the earth – to see this tree again in full bloom is very special indeed. We were thus very happy indeed to see the transplanted iron wood tree come into full bloom in the Garden of the Unexpected in March this year. This rare tree (*Guaiacum officinale* or *lignum vitae*) had been moved to this location in the month of October last year.

It was carried here by lorry from the test pond site where it had quietly grown and bloomed for 40 years. The test pond excavation was reaching its full width and length and we had to make the hard choice to attempt to transplant the tree. Now it blooms in the garden of the Unexpected, a sure sign that the transplant has gone well.

The space allotted to the garden of the Unexpected, on the western edge of the Matrimandir gardens oval, had been largely untouched since it was shaped and given its basic wave-like form some 15 years ago. Now, after the long design exercise carried within the community throughout 2017 -18 it is being transformed under the guidance of a dedicated team of landscapers and plant enthusiasts.

There has been a lot of activity in this particular garden over the last months. Two sub-sections of the garden were well established by the time we entered into full Covid - 19 lock down a year ago, and now, in the last few months, the work has picked up at full speed again, echoing the burst of developmental activity which is to be seen today all over the Matrimandir site.



During January a team of Auroville youth built up a tree platform in the third section of this garden... This beautiful organic looking structure offers a place for children to explore. It offers them a different view, – and an experience which will foster the opening of their horizons.

The intention of this garden, as expressed by Roger Anger, architect of Matrimandir, is to offer a space where children can widen, marvel, explore the unexpected and begin to enter into the deeper atmosphere of the Matrimandir. Thus each aspect in the new Garden of the Unexpected attempts to lead

in this direction. As with all the Matrimandir gardens, this space will surely evolve over time as we learn more, appreciate more, as we find new ways to connect more with the intended atmosphere of each of the gardens.



Water Lilies and a field of sunflowers, below, bloom in the first section of the Garden of the Unexpected.



The Garden of Existence

Another garden space, on the eastern side of the gardens, is currently receiving a major upgrade.

The Garden of Existence was the first of the 12 main gardens to be developed, over the course of a few years starting in 2009. It has since been an integral part of the set of five gardens which have been built to date (Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Progress and Unity garden near the banyan tree).

About two years ago, a community survey made it clear that an upgrade, a change, for the central part of this first garden would be appreciated. At the same time Matrimandir received the offer to replace the

central granite stone of the original garden design by a set of natural quartz crystals.

We took up the challenge to make this change and in August 2020 the large granite stone, the central focus of the garden for the last 11 years, was removed by crane and has since found a new home in the Garden of the Unexpected, close to the transplanted iron wood tree.

For the last several months work has been under way, first to build the foundation base needed to support the 10 tons of quartz crystals which are to be installed in place of the granite stone, and then to begin the crystal group installation.



Work is still underway. The whole installation will be comprised of some 50 crystals of different sizes ranging from coconut size to the largest which is over one meter tall and weighs more than one ton. Three benches, also sliced from large rough blocks of quartz crystal have been positioned at the edge of the central oval of this garden to provide sitting space for concentration on the main crystal group when complete.

The work is fascinating, the naturally polished sides of the 6 sided crystals are wonderful to see. A whole new dimension is being added to the many faceted jewel that the Matrimandir gardens form.

Design Call for the Gardens of Light, Life, Power and Wealth

We have mentioned over the last year that a large design exercise is underway for the future gardens, – this is the call to create designs for the next four of the main gardens: Light, Life, Power and Wealth.

More than 100 design teams had responded to the open international design call. During an 18 month process the submitted concepts had been reviewed and filtered by a technical panel, an international Expert Panel and an Auroville community panel.

Finally, in March 2021 the two leading teams of designers had been invited to Auroville to go through a two week integration process attempting to synthesize a final design from the best elements of their respective concepts and feedback from the Panels. By June they will share their fully integrated designs.

After a final round of community feedback, we will then be ready to start on this next phase of building the central gardens of Matrimandir.

Cobble Stone road, Infrastructure installation and the Test Pond

All along the outer perimeter of the Matrimandir gardens we have also seen a big increase in the work over the last few months. The cobble stone road following the edge of the gardens has been extended

by a further 130-meter stretch. (There are still 900 more meters to go!)

And just outside this road, five parallel HDPE pipes have been buried in the earth, as conduits for future electrical lines and water supply. As the gardens oval has a perimeter length of 1100 meters, this means that about 5.5 kilometers of pipe line have by now been laid in place along the road edge.

A little beyond this, virtually the entire oval perimeter has been cleared and leveled, to prepare the way for the construction, in the next months, of the seven-meter-wide rain water harvesting channel. This channel will be put in place to receive storm water runoff from the gardens and lead it to the test pond being constructed beyond the south east edge of the gardens.

The test pond itself has reached its full depth of 10 meters at the center. Soon we will start the work of giving the final shape to its sloping edges so as to be ready for the lining and waterproofing process to be taken up later this summer.

It is difficult to describe in words the hive of activity that we have seen over the last few months.

It's as if Matrimandir is pushing towards the future with a greatly renewed strength. It is an inspiring time indeed.

