



TREES

of Sri Aurobindo Sadhana Peetham
A Self-guided Tour

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To
Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

Created in collaboration between SASP residents and community members.

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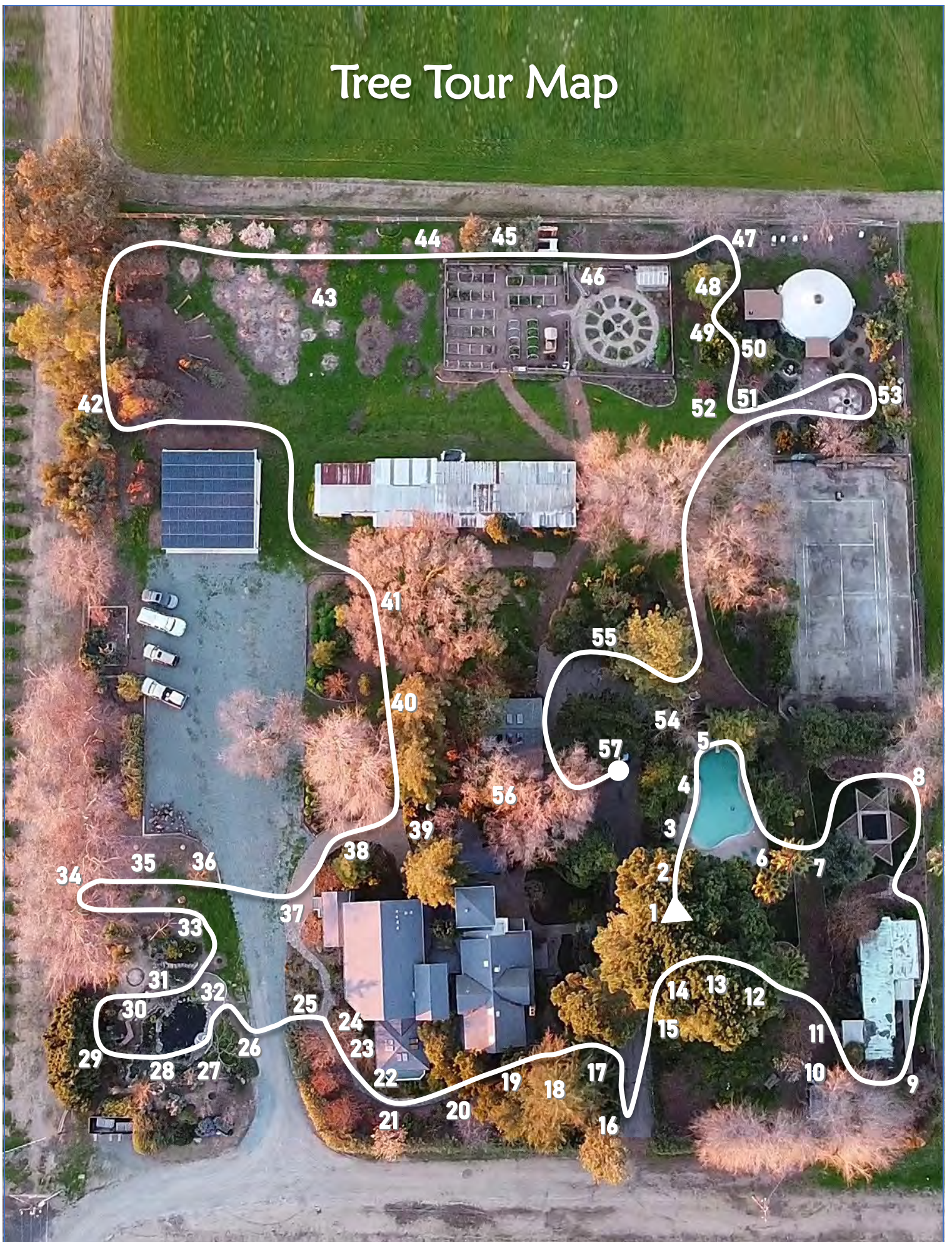
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Tree Tour Map



Let's meet...

at the feet of our Ashram-Elder “Victorious”, the giant pine, the oldest and tallest tree on the property and our sphere-keeper and guardian. Let's have a seat at the bench by her trunk, come to silence and prepare ourselves for what is about to come:



1. This tour is meant to be an integral experience. For trees are no mental beings, it is impossible to come into contact with them mentally alone. Trees are physical, vital and psychic beings and to enjoy them fully it is needed to engage our whole being: mind and body, feelings and soul!
2. To engage our body, we may try use all our physical senses, not only our eyes. We may touch the tree to sense it, we may smell its bark, its leaves, or flowers, we may listen to the wind in its crown or to its silence, and we may taste a fruit when it is ripe. Let us try to be fully present in all our physical senses!
3. To engage our feelings and our soul also, we may be reminded, that a tree is a psychic being who acts on the vital plane. To come into a real contact with it we need to open ourselves energetically to its unique vibration or try to be in contact with our own psychic being. When we are close to a tree or even touch it, we just have to come to silence and feel our hearts...
4. The Mother gave a spiritual significance to some of the trees which will be mentioned in the description and we may try to perceive it by being in a subtle contact with the tree. But *all* trees may have a spiritual message for us: Which tree attracts or touches us? Is something in us triggered by the tree? And what?
5. Let's be child-like! This tour shall not be a dry information or boring lesson, but a living and joyful experience: Let's encourage ourselves to be playful, spontaneous and intuitive and not to follow the book's guidance only, but our own inner guide. Let's leave the red line and go freely to each tree we feel to say hello.



01 ITALIAN STONE PINE

Pinus pinea

Italian stone pine is native to the Mediterranean area and naturalized in North and South Africa as well as in New South Wales, Australia. The tree is also called umbrella pine, and when you look at its shape, you know why. Our Ashram Guardian named Victorious is at least 120 years old, and because it is the tallest tree in area, it is often used as a landmark for small aircrafts flying over the area. The Mother gave the name **Perpetual Vitality** to all evergreens. Surely you are curious about its name “Victorious”: This lore will be revealed at the very end.

Turning towards the swimming pool, a few feet away and slightly to our left, we will find...

02 TRUE MYRTLE or GREEK MYRTLE

Myrtus communis

True Myrtle is an evergreen native across the whole Mediterranean region, with dark green glossy leaves that have a spicy fragrance when bruised, and pretty purple droop-like fruits in the fall. It gives small very fragrant pure white flowers, to which according to the Mother signify **To Live Only For the Divine**. “*This means to have overcome all the difficulties of the individual life.*”

Our Myrtle is probably as old as “Victorious” and is much larger than most True Myrtles. Actually, what you see is not a tree but a giant shrub! Can you spot a smaller Myrtle tree across the driveway?

Just ahead to the left of the pool, we will find to our left two ...



03 ROSE OF SHARON

Hibiscus syriacus

Rose of Sharon is a flowering tree in the mallow family native to south-central and southeast China, but widely introduced elsewhere. It was given the epithet “syriacus” because it had been collected from gardens in Syria. The flowers of Rose of Sharon can have different appearances, according to its variety: As single funnel-shaped or as double shaped flowers. This variety gives birth to beautiful double shaped flowers. The significance attributed by the Mother to the medium-sized single funnel-shaped lavender flower with a magenta centre and white anthers, is **Power in the Higher Vital**, that is “*Power that wants to be at the service of the Divine*”.

Next, we will find three ...



04 SHINY XYLOSMA

Xylosma congestum

Shiny xylosma is a flowering plant native to the tropics and subtropics. Its flowers are small and yellowish and have such a strong scent that the tree is named after it: *xylosma* originates from the Greek *xylon* and *osme*, which means *wood* and *smell*. No wonder that the bees love this tree!

Moving forward around the pool we will find two ...

05 JAPANESE BLACK PINE

Pinus thunbergii

Japanese black pine is native to coastal areas of Japan and South Korea. Notice their long needles, which are in pairs with a white sheath at the base. The dark-gray bark is deeply furrowed and grooved, making it gnarled and rugged: Perfect to cultivate as a bonsai. This tree is also used as an important element in Japanese gardens, often trained as *Niwaki*, which means *garden tree*, term also used to describe trees that are highly sculpturable.

Continuing our clockwise movement, we will find four...



06 CALIFORNIA FAN PALM

Washingtonia filifera

California fan palm is both the largest and the only palm tree which is native to the western United States. *Filifera* means *thread bearing* – take a look at the palm fronds to see how appropriate this name is. When you close your eyes, you may see them in their native habitat on stream-fed oasis in Colorado, and in Sonoran and Mohave Deserts. Nearly all of our palms were brought from Southern California when the ashram moved here.

Leaving the pool area through the eastern gate you will find a bench and....



07 MISSION OLIVE

Olea europea "Mission"

While Olive trees are native to the Mediterranean area, the Mission Olive is a cultivar developed in California by Spanish missionaries along El Camino Real in the late 18th century. On the bench under this tree our ashram member Zackaria Moursi used to spend his spare time. After his passing in 2018 a memorial was designated at this site.

In the back left corner of the symbol garden, behind a second bench, you can find ...

08 AMERICAN ELM

Ulmus americana

American elm is native to eastern North America. Its bark has deep furrows separated by flat ridges, and its wood is quite brittle. Elms are known for their easy falling or dropping branches in storms (and sometimes also on peaceful silent days, as you can find out when asking a member...). This Elm is quite strong, and you can safely enjoy a rest or a meditation on the bench. There are many Elm trees around the Ashram, along the border and up the alley that leads to the Yurt, called the "Elm Alley".

Can you see another Fan Palm (06) by the symbol garden? Let's walk to the pathway left of the green cottage until the end-corner of the property ...



09 POMEGRANATE

Punica granatum

Pomegranate is a deciduous tree that bears delicious and healthy fruits. After opening the apple-like fruit you are confronted with a cup of glittering rubies which are delicate but worthwhile to be freed. These pomegranate seeds are brimming with antioxidants which have various positive effects on the human body. The Mother calls the fruits **Divine Love spreading over the Earth**, while She calls the *single* orange flowers of this variety "**Divine Sacrifice**", "a flower reputed to bloom even in the desert".

Continue the pathway, note three big Elms (08) along the property line. Face the main building and find a smaller V-shape trunk tree directly in your line of sight ...



10 ALMOND

Prunus dulcis

Almond is native to the Mediterranean region and is one of the first to blossom in the Central Valley. Nearby in February we can enjoy its small light pink-white blossoms, which the Mother calls the **Smile of Nature**, meaning “*Nature rejoices in her beauty*”. The sessile saucer-shaped flowers with five rounded petals and many stamens, are borne singly or in pairs. The tree is covered with flowers in spring before the leaves appear and later bears edible nuts. It is hard to believe that California alone produces over 2 billion lbs. across 1 million acres of shelled almonds a year (which is more than half of the worldwide yield) and has to spend about one gallon of water for each single nut! Well, let’s enjoy mindfully...

To your right nearby, you will find...

11 CRAPE MYRTLE

Lagerstroemia indica

Crape myrtle is native to the Indian subcontinent, southeast Asia, northern Australia and parts of Oceania. The tree is chiefly known for its colorful and long-lasting flowers which occur in summer. The colors of the flowers vary from deep purple to red to white with almost every shade in between. The bark is quite similar to the bark of another tree... Right, it was the eucalyptus which we wanted to remember: the eucalyptus also belongs to the myrtle family, hence the resemblance. There is another Myrtle nearby, by the cottage and the symbol garden – can you recognize it?

Take the path on your left towards the main building. As you pass another smaller Myrtle you can find several citrus trees. The first one is...



12 SWEET ORANGE

Citrus x sinensis

Sweet orange originated in ancient China and was first mentioned in Chinese literature in 314 BC. It is not a wild fruit, but a hybrid- But are you, like me, often lost in the obscure jungle of citrus varieties? Let’s bring some clarity into it- There are two ancestors of all citrus varieties we will find here: the mandarin and the pomelo. The sweet orange is a hybrid between mandarin and pomelo.

The second tree in line is...



13 GRAPEFRUIT

Citrus x paradisi

Grapefruit in turn is a hybrid between sweet orange and pomelo. It originated in Barbados as an accidental cross and was first mentioned in 1750. Currently, the grapefruit is said to be one of “the seven wonders of Barbados”. We all know its large, sour to semi-sweet and somewhat bitter fruits, and when you are a little uncertain what to do with it: Juice it! There are two varieties of grapefruits here, pink and white, both packed with vitamins and antioxidants, yet most people prefer pink grapefruit because of the sweeter taste.

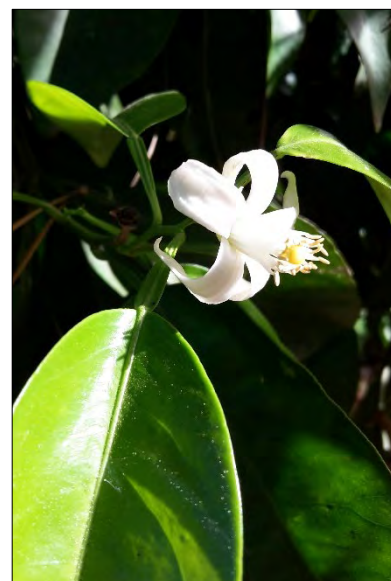
The last tree in the citrus line along the path is ...

14 TANGELO

Citrus x tangelo

Tangelo is, like the sweet orange, a hybrid between mandarin and pomelo, only with a slight variation- instead of the original mandarin, one of its varieties was used: the tangerine. The tangelo is smaller than an orange, much easier to peel, and has a characteristic “nipple” at its stem. Mnemonic: TANG-ELO is a hybrid of TANGerine and pomELO!

Adjoining the line of citrus trees, we will find ...



15 SOUTHERN MAGNOLIA or BULL BAY

Magnolia grandiflora

Southern magnolia is native to the southeastern United States. It is a striking evergreen tree with large, dark green leaves and very large, white fragrant, ivory white cup-shaped flower with firm petals flowers up to 12 inches in diameter! According to the Mother the significance of Magnolia is **Perfect Vigilance**: “*Nothing is neglected in its observation.*” This particular tree had a difficult start – for years it was shaded and suppressed by a much larger elm. Since the elm had to be removed the magnolia is now free to thrive and grow. Now there are 6 more magnolia varieties planted nearby, behind all the citruses.

Let’s move our attention further to the other side of the driveway. At the end of the driveway, along the property line you will find ...



16 SIERRA WESTERN JUNIPER

Juniperus grandis

Sierra western juniper is native to the western United States and is a coniferous plant of the cypress family. The name “Sierra” means exactly the mountains where these trees are mostly found (the Sierra Nevada). They are readily seen in the Yosemite National Park, for example in the Tuolumne Meadows area, and in the high country of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. But they also live in San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains and higher elevations of Mojave Desert. The top is almost always dead in old trees. Some are mere weathered stumps, decorated with a few leafy sprays, reminding one of the crumbling towers of some ancient castle.

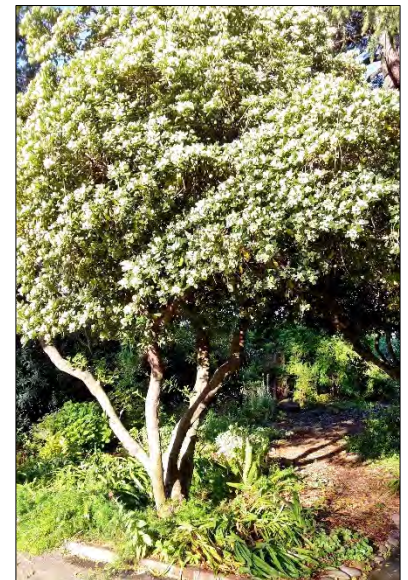
Walk towards the path leading to the main house and look for three...

17 JAPANESE MOCK ORANGE

Pittosporum tobira

Japanese mock orange is a flowering tree native to Japan, China and Korea. Today it is used throughout the world as an ornamental plant in landscaping. Its name *pittosporum* describes the genus of about 200 species of which the Japanese mock orange is one. This special tree has an important task: it marks the entrance to the “Relics Path” which leads us along the south side of the main building.

Take the unpaved Relics Path to the left and find behind a bench to our right ...



18 DEODAR CEDAR

Cedrus deodara

Deodar cedar is native to the mountains of the western Himalaya and the Mediterranean regions at elevations above 3000 feet. The botanical name derives from the Sanskrit term *devadāru*, which means *wood of the gods* (*deva* means *god* and *dāru* means *wood*). Among Hindus, the deodar cedar is worshipped as a Divine tree, and this specimen found the right place to grow in the sacred proximity of the Relics.

Following the Relics Path a little further we will see some steps leading to an entrance door. To the right of these steps, find ...



19 BAY LAUREL

Laurus nobilis

Bay laurel is a large hardwood tree native to the Mediterranean region. Although we may not be a sophisticated chef or a renowned historian, we may recognize its well-known leaves. First, as the only ingredient in a soup which we are allowed to lick off and put to the side, and second as a symbol of victory and wisdom- the early Greeks and Romans crowned their heroes and poets with wreaths of laurel leaves. There are several Bay trees in the property, take a close look at the leaves and trunk and you may be able to recognize them on your way.

Well, we should not rest on our laurels yet, but make a few steps further along the Relics Path. To your left, just past the wisteria-clad entrance-arc, we can find ...

20 JAPANESE FLOWERING CHERRY "KWANZAN"

Prunus serrulata "Kwanzan"

Kwanzan is the most popular cultivar of all flowering cherries, for it is considered to be the most ornamental one. It is loved for its profuse and showy spring bloom and its beautiful deep pink blossoms. Have you ever been in Paris and visited the *Jardin des Plantes*? Go in April and lose yourself in the sea of Kwanzan's colour and beauty...

The next tree in line to your left is ...



21 ORNAMENTAL BRADFORD PEAR

Pyrus calleryana

Ornamental bradford pear is native to China and Vietnam. Although it might be compelling for you to try the smallest pears in the world (less than 1 cm), don't do it- they are quite woody. The white blossoms in spring are nice, but even more charming is its brilliant-colored foliage in autumn, ranging from yellow and orange to red and pink and even to purple and bronze.

We are in front of the Relics Room and I can't move on without having a short adoration... Then follow the path as it turns right. You will pass to your left two more crape myrtles (11), and will find to your right ...



22 JAPANESE MAPLE

Acer palmatum "Seiryu"

Japanese maple originated in Japan. This particular variety "seiryu" is different from others in that it grows in an upright form rather than a cascading or weeping one. Have, if possible, a closer look at these lovely, tiny, lacy green leaves and then enjoy in your imagination a time-lapse into fall: the whole foliage turns slowly into bronze and a spectacular brilliant red!

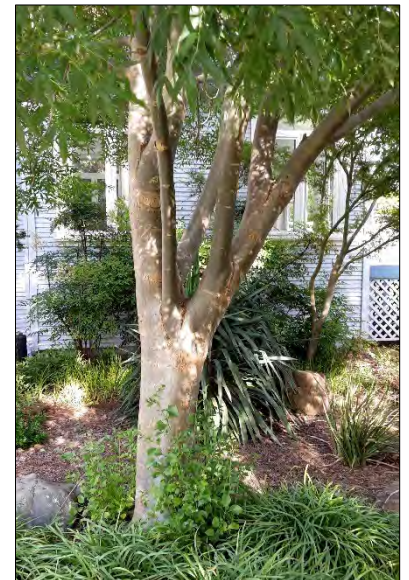
The next big tree to your right, a few feet away is ...

23 RAYWOOD ASH

Fraxinus oxycarpa "Raywood"

Raywood ash is a cultivar of the Ash tree, which is a genus of flowering plants in the Olive family. It was first discovered in South Australia in 1910, and later introduced to Britain and North America. This tree, too, as the third in line, turns its foliage into a beautiful claret red, and when we allow ourselves to humanize these three trees a little bit, we can almost imagine how they compete each year for the most impressive and shining fall colors...

Located a little further back, very close to the main building, are two ...



24 HINOKI CYPRESS

Chamaecyparis obtusa "Gracilis"

This "graceful hinoki cypress" is a sleek, slender, upright evergreen with soft, medium-green needles native to Japan. "Gracilis" is a dwarf variety of the common hinoki cypress and grows only to a height of 25 feet. The hinoki is not only grown for its very high-quality timber in Japan- where it is used to build palaces, temples and shrines- but also to use as incense for its light and earthy aroma.

Let's turn towards the pond located on the other side of the driveway. But before moving towards the pond, have a look to your right, where you will find ...



25 CHINESE PISTACHE

Pistacia chinensis

Chinese pistache is native to central and western China and belongs to the cashew family. Unfortunately, we will find neither pistachios nor cashews on this tree, but we are not far from that: the Chinese Pistache is often used as a rootstock for the pistacia vera, on which the delicious pistachios are growing.

From here let's cross the pathway to the pond area, the Meditation Garden...

26 DESERT WILLOW

Chilopsis linearis

Desert willow is native to the southwestern United States and Mexico. Actually, the desert willow is not a true willow, but is called that because of its long thin leaves which look willow-like. It was cultivated not only for its large and showy flowers, but also for its use in traditional medicine as well as for building bows and baskets from its wood.

While in the Meditation Garden, we will drift our attention to some trees clockwise around the pond. In the small hill to your left, you will find three ...



27 ROCKY MOUNTAIN JUNIPER

Juniperus scopulorum

Rocky mountain juniper is native to western North America and grows in nature at altitudes of 1,600 to 8,900 feet. Its name *scopulorum* relates to that, for it means *on the mountain*. The extraordinary strength of this species allows it to grow on dry rocky soil and to remain in its physical shape for a long period. A dead trunk found in New Mexico showed 1,888 rings!

Look out for the meditating Buddha. Although his Bliss of Unity is appealing to us, we want to focus our attention on the tree under which he sits. It is ...



28 EASTERN REDBUD

Cercis canadensis

Eastern redbud is native to eastern North America and is the state tree of Oklahoma. Its papilionaceous, magenta pink colored flowers appear from spring to early summer on the bare tree before the leaves start to grow. This is the time of its tender and most graceful beauty ... and Buddha dwells under a flower-spangled sky.

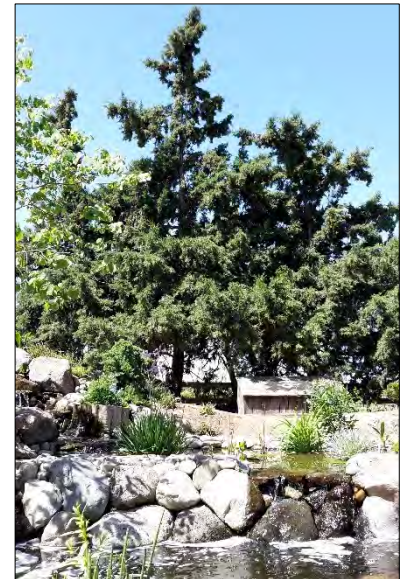
Let's continue our clockwise circle and move all the way to the property line, along which you will find four ...

29 CHINESE JUNIPER

Juniperus chinensis

Chinese juniper is native to northeast Asia and grows in China, Mongolia, Japan, Korea and the southeast of Russia. It is widely used in bonsai, such as the 250-year-old "Omija Tree" in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. To be honest, we are not certain that these trees are chinese junipers, but it is our best guess :).

Up the stump steps, around the pond, we can find three ...



30 VANDERWOLF'S LIMBER PINE

Pinus flexilis "Vanderwolf's Pyramid"

Vanderwolf's limber pine is primarily found in the Rocky Mountains from Canada to New Mexico at elevations of 5,000 to 12,000 feet. The specific epithet refers to its flexible branchlets. It grows first pyramidal but matures over time to a more rounded form. Its lofty shape and its long, twisted, silvery-blue-green needles give it a majestic appearance.

At the end of the hill, you will see to your left...



31 CORAL BARK MAPLE

Acer palmatum 'Sango-kaku'

Coral bark maple trees are Japanese maples with four seasons of interest in the landscape. In spring, its seven-lobed, simple, palmate leaves open in a bright, lime green or chartreuse color. As spring turns to summer, these leaves turn a deeper green. In autumn, the foliage turns golden yellow and orange. And as the foliage drops in fall, the tree's bark begins to turn an attractive, reddish-pink, which intensifies with the cold weather. *Acer* is Latin for sharp and *palmatum* means shaped like a hand referring to the shape of the leaves.

We have now reached a small Zen-garden, where we can find two cranes and ...

32 WEEPING WILLOW

Salix babylonica

Although weeping willow is native to dry areas of northern China, it loves moisture and is commonly found along the water's edge in parks and large landscapes. This (true!) willow was traded along the silk road, and slowly made its way to southwest Asia and Europe. A botanist found this tree along the Euphratis River and thought it to be the willow of biblical mention – hence the name *babylonica*.

Go left past the meditation garden sign and you will see...



33 PERSIAN SILK TREE or MIMOSA

Albizia julibrissin

Mimosa is native to Asia, from Iran to Japan. It was introduced to the United States in 1745 as an ornamental plant. Mimosa is a legume with double-compound leaves that give the 20- to 40-foot tree a fern-like appearance. Each leaf has 10 to 25 leaflets and 40 to 60 subleaflets per leaflet. In the summer, the tree produces pink puff flowers. Fruits are produced in the fall and are contained in tan seedpods. The epithet *julibrissin* is derived from the Persian word *gul-i abrisham* which means *silk-flower* - the ornamental flowers are produced in dense inflorescences which look like silky threads.

Let's go from here towards the property line, where you will find five ...



34 CHINESE ELM

Ulmus parvifolia

Chinese elm is native to eastern Asia and is described as one of the most splendid elms. Do you remember that we were already introduced to another elm, the American elm? Try to remember the appearance of its bark: deep furrows separated by flat ridges. Can you see the striking difference?

On our way back to the driveway we will first pass...

35 GINKGO or MAIDENHAIR TREE

Ginkgo biloba

Ginkgo is native to China and southern Japan. It is an ancient tree (found in fossils dating back 270 million years) and a long-living one: some specimens are claimed to be more than 2,500 years old. The small nuts inside the seeds are a traditional Chinese food. They are often served for special occasions like weddings and Chinese New Year, for they are believed to be healthy and aphrodisiacal.

And close to the driveway is...



36 ORNAMENTAL or CHERRY PLUM

Prunus cerasifera

Cherry plum is native to southeast Europe and western Asia. It is one of the first trees to flower in spring, often starting in mid-February before the leaves have opened – what a pale pink and timeless beauty! We can find edible fruits ripening to yellow or red from July to September.

Let's go back to the other side of the driveway and look out for Ganesh, the elephant-headed Deity of wisdom and success. Surely, he feels fine under ...



37 POMEGRANATE

Punica granatum

Maybe you remember seeing another pomegranate? It was near the cottage, and we mentioned **Divine Sacrifice** as the significance attributed by The Mother to its single orange flowers. Well, this variety here adorns itself with gorgeous double orange flowers, which means that each flower holds innumerable crinkled petals. The name given by The Mother for these double orange flowers is **Divine Love**.

We can follow the paved path turning right around the main house. As soon as we have finished the bend, we will find...

38 COASTAL REDWOOD

Sequoia sempervirens

Coastal redwoods are found on the coast from southern Oregon to central California, and naturally do not live more than 50 miles inland. Redwoods are giant and long-living trees: Some of them reach up to 379 feet in height (without the roots) and are therefore the tallest living trees on earth. Of course, to reach this height they need some time. Luckily, they are gifted with a lifespan from 1200 to 1800 years or more... There are three more Redwoods nearby, easy to spot by their size and characteristic bark.

Just ahead you will find...



39 MISSION FIG or BLACK MISSION

Ficus carica "Mission"

Mission fig was introduced to the United States in 1768 when Franciscan missionaries planted it first in San Diego and later in their subsequent missions. In this way the Franciscan missionaries established the fig up the whole California coast. This specimen is a very mature and very giving tree. He is around 80 years old and offers delicious figs twice a year – much to the delight of the SASP community.

Turning to our left and walking towards the barn, we will pass two Redwoods (38) and one more Elm (08), before finding on our right...



40 FRENCH TAMARISK

Tamarix gallica

French tamarisk is indigenous to Saudi Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula, and is quite common around the Mediterranean region. Its tiny pink flowers are borne on narrow feather-like spikes which are hanging downwards in graceful curves. This special appearance makes this tree very unique, especially since it flowers before the green leaves have started to grow.

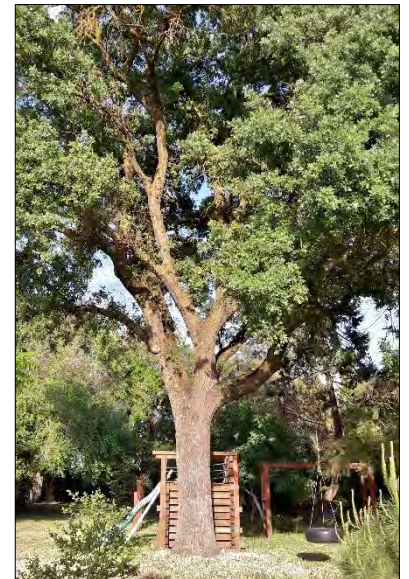
On our way to the barn, we can't miss the big tree by the playground. It is ...

41 VALLEY OAK

Quercus lobata

The valley oak is endemic to California and grows commonly in interior valleys and foothills. Oaks may attain an age of up to 600 years and their sturdy trunk may exceed 10 feet in diameter. Don't be fooled by the apple-like balls hanging all over the crown – those are not mutated acorns but *oak-apples* or *galls*. Galls are abnormal outgrowths of the oak itself, caused by substances injected by the gall wasp. The wasp larvae feed the gall tissue which protects them till metamorphosing into wasps.

Let's have a longer walk in between the barn and the solar pavilion. Behind the pavilion, at the western property line, we will find several ...



42 EUCALYPTUS or RED GUM

Eucalyptus camaldulensis

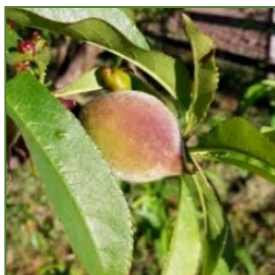
Eucalyptus is a fast-growing tree with very hard wood native to Australia. It was brought to California during the gold rush as a source of timber. Unfortunately, most of the eucalyptus trees grown here were the wrong species and could not be used for timber because its wood was brittle and twisted and cracked when dry. Apart from this you may know various products with Eucalyptus to cure coughs and colds and to relieve muscle and joint pain. Before leaving these trees, let's have a closer look at the bark and try to memorize it...

Along the northern boundary there are many fruit trees...

43 THE FRUIT GARDEN

We will find a wide variety of fruit trees in the fruit garden, like apple, pear, cherry, peach, apricot and pluot, a combination of PLUM and apricOT.

Let's spend some quality time in the fruit garden. Empty your mind, come to a peaceful state and allow the atmosphere to enter your body, become more and more one with the trees and follow your intuition: where does it pull you? Can you feel the tree within yourself? What comes to your subtle sense when you dive deeper into your inner perception: a fragrance, an image, some knowledge?



Across the fruit garden, near the property line, at the edge of the vegetable garden, you will see ...



44 FUYU PERSIMMON

Diospyros kaki "Fuyu"

Persimmons are native to China, Japan, Myanmar and Nepal. There are two kinds of persimmons popular in California: *fuyu* and *hachiya*. This tree is a *fuyu*, and its fruit is crispy like an apple and can be eaten off the tree when ripe. The fruit of *hachiya* has a lot of tannin and is bitter unless eaten when seemingly over-ripe.

Let's now have a walk on the narrow path between the fence of the vegetable garden and the property line. The next two trees are ...

45 KALAMATA OLIVE

Olea europaea "Kalamata"

Kalamata olive is named after the city of Kalamata in southern Greece. The name *kalamata* is protected by law in the European Union and only those which are grown on the Greek Peloponnese peninsula are allowed to be called this. Nevertheless, the fruit of these trees is excellent, but takes a lot of work to prepare and to preserve. If you have eaten olives here at SASP they may have been from these trees.

As you continue and pass another Fuyu Persimmon (44), look to your right over the fence, and you will find inside the flower garden ...



46 MORNING CLOUD

Chitalpa tashkentensis

The Chitalpa is a cross between *Catalpa bignonioides* and *Chilopsis linearis*. The *Chilopsis* is a desert tree, sometimes called a Desert Willow. the *Catalpa* which is hardy to almost every zone in the United States. The beautiful azalea like flowers of our Pink Dawn are also similar to those of a *Catalpa*. The Chitalpa starts flowering in late spring and flowers until late fall. they provide nectar for hummingbirds. but, also, for butterflies, bees and beneficial insects.

As we continue to walk along the property line towards the yurt and the beehives, we will find, framed by two Chinese Elms (34), two smaller trees called...



47 JUJUBE

Ziziphus jujuba

The precise natural distribution of the Jujube is uncertain because of its extensive cultivation (circa 9000 BC), but it is thought to be anywhere in southern Asia. Jujube is also called *red*, *chinese*, or *indian date* and its edible fruits look, when dried, similar to ordinary dates but are less sweet. The use of this wonderful healthy fruit is wide-ranging both in culinary pleasures (fresh or dried, ranging from a candied snack to a concoction pounded with chili, salt and jaggery) and as part of a number of systems of traditional medicine. The jujube seems to be a real gift of nature!

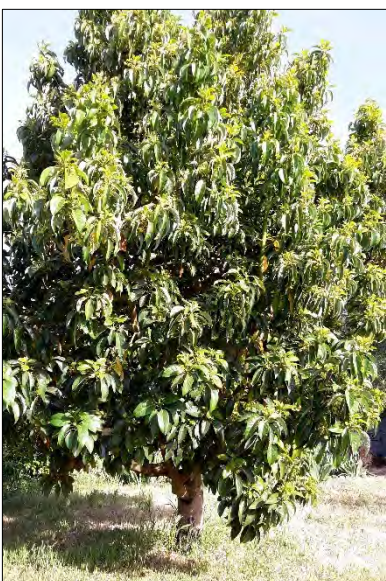
Only a few feet away in the southwestern direction, we will find ...

48 MEXICAN or CAPULIN CHERRY

Prunus salicifolia

Mexican cherry is a geographic variant of the well-known black cherry (*prunus serotina*), called this because of its origin Mexico and Guatemala. The sweet cherries are not only delicious but are said to be very healthy. They are abounded with special antioxidants that may fend off certain chronic diseases. This special compound, called anthocyanins, is also causal for the cherry's dark red or nearly black color.

The next two trees are ...



49 AVOCADO

Persea americana

Avocado is probably native to Mexico and well known for its exceptional fruits. Instead of praising its health benefits (!) and its delicacy on bread (with salt) or as a guacamole dip, we will entertain ourselves with two facts: 1) Quite a few people use the greasy fruits to lotion their body. 2) Two other names for the Avocado-fruit are *Alligator-pear* and *Butter-fruit*. You will realize the cause of these strange names instantaneously when you have prepared one...

From here, look towards the yurt and you will see...



50 PINEAPPLE GUAVA

Acca sellowiana

Pineapple guava is native to the highlands of southern Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Colombia, and is widely cultivated as an ornamental tree and for its fruits. It is not a true guava, but its fruits appear remarkably similar- they look like a combination between an avocado and an egg, and their sweet aromatic flavor is somewhere between pineapple, apple and mint. In New Zealand, life without “feijoas” would be unthinkable- they infuse everything, from chocolate to crumbles and from ice-cream to vodka with their distinctive, soapy-citrus flavor.

Walking towards the entrance of Saraswati’s Paradise you can see to your left...

51 SILK TREE or MIMOSA “SUMMER CHOCOLATE”

Albizia julibrissin

You may remember seeing a silk tree by the pond? The variety we are seeing here is a new cultivar, discovered 1990 in Japan: *summer chocolate*. Its foliage is red to dark bronze instead of pure green. Because its leaves slowly close during the night, the tree is called *sleeping tree* in Japan.



To your right is...



52 PEACH

Prunus persica

Peach is native to northwest China where it was first domesticated and cultivated. The specific name *persica* refers to its widespread cultivation in Persia (present-day Iran), from where it was transplanted to Europe. Have you ever realized that the inside of a peach stone tastes like an almond? Some clever businessmen started to use the peach stone to make a cheap version of marzipan, which is today known as Persipan. The reason for this similar taste is obvious: both plants belong to the same genus, *prunus*.

As we walk towards the fire pit, we can see by the Lila Court fence on our right one Almond (10) and three Bay (19) trees - Can you recognize them? Walk past the fire pit to the eastern border of the property so you can find seven...



53 LEYLAND CYPRESS

Cupressus x leylandii

We find ourselves in Leighton Hall, Wales in the year 1888. Mr. Leyland, the owner of the property, commissioned Edward Kemp to lay out the garden, who planted two North American species of conifers in close proximity to each other: *nootka* and *monterey cypress*. This allows us to witness something which never would be possible in wildlife: the female flowers of *nootka* get fertilized by pollen from *monterey* and give birth to a new species: the *leyland cypress*, which we can admire right here and now!

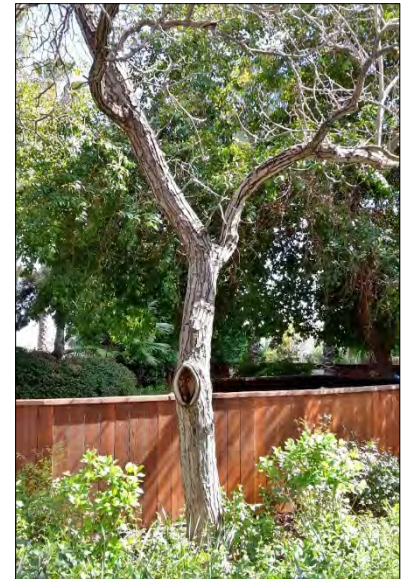
Now let's walk down the Alley of Elms (08) towards the main building, until we find by the pool gate to our left ...

54 BLACK WALNUT

Juglans nigra

Black walnut is native to eastern North America. It is an important tree commercially not only because of its deep brown colored and easily worked wood, but also because of its distinctive and desirable walnuts. Well, if you find a little less weed around the tree, it is not because we did a good weeding job, but because the roots release chemicals that harm other organisms and give the tree a competitive advantage.

Turn to the right before the Temple of Tools and you will find...



55 LOQUAT

Eriobotrya japonica

Loquat is native to the cooler hill regions of China. Its fruits look similar to peaches but are yellow and have a couple of quite big ovules. The taste is deliciously sweet, and could be a mixture of peach, citrus and mild mango. Mostly the fruits are eaten fresh, and because they mix very well with other fruits, a big bowl of fruit-salad is always a good choice when loquat is available.

Continuing past the entrance of the Temple of the Tools, we can see on the right ...

56 CALIFORNIA PRIVET

Ligustrum ovalifolium

California privet is native to Japan and Korea. This tree has a unique life story: It started in a tiny pot, grew into a small shrub, and was replanted into a wooden container which was placed exactly *here*. As years passed by, the tree was continued to grow, and the wooden container began to fall apart. More years passed till eventually the attempt was made to put the tree into a new pot- but there was no pot anymore: the roots had already grown deep into the ground- and here it is, our confident privet ...

Now let's move back to the center island of flowers, where we will find a sculpture of Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy, and...



57 HOLLYWOOD JUNIPER

Juniperus chinensis "Kaizuka"

Hollywood juniper is native to China, Japan, Mongolia and the Himalayas. Well, what to say... Is it the proud and majestic beauty of Guan Yin, and her irresistible appeal of magic charisma which makes this central place so attractive – or is it the unique twisted form of this tree, its strength and chaotic harmony? No, there is nothing more to say, for words are needless at this place of splendor...

We have now closed our circle around the property and come to the end of our tour. Our Ashram-Elder Victorious is nearby, let's meet again at its trunk for some final words.

Victory!

Our Ashram-Elder is called "Victorious" because he constitutes a giant and distinct Victory-sign. Having this symbol at this central spot of the property and remembering its connection to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother for us is a statement as well as a reminder. It is Their assurance and Their promise of victory which motivate us to go forward and give us hope when it is needed. It is Their graceful presence which we receive also through "Victory" by giving us shelter under his crown and safety by his strength. Indeed, it is by Their grace that the atmosphere of Divine victory sprouts not only here but anywhere in the world where a seed of Light is sowed by a thought of goodwill or an act of love.

