

Meet a Scientist: Dr. Adán Colón-Carmona

Meet Dr. Adán Colón-Carmona! He is a **plant biologist**. Biologists study living things. Adán focuses on plants.

Adán is an expert in how plants grow. He researches what happens in plants' cells to make them grow. He also researches how plant growth changes when plants are exposed to **pollutants**.

Adán's goal is to create a healthier environment. In the future, he aims to create plants that can break down pollutants found in the soil into less harmful pieces!

Like many scientists, Adán works at a university and teaches college students in addition to his research. He loves interacting with and learning from his students. He also does service work to support his community.

We interviewed Adán to learn more about him!

What was your childhood like? Did you like science?

Early in my childhood, I lived in a small village in México, in the state of Zacatecas. Members of my extended family were farmers, growing mostly maize, beans, and squash. My love for plants originated in seeing and understanding how plants provide us the food we eat and how they beautify the landscape.



Adán in elementary school

My family moved to California and I remained interested in science and math. I also liked working with my hands. I continued to enjoy growing plants at home, and started gardening for my neighbors.

During that time, I did not realize I could become a scientist, work directly with plants, and get paid to do something I loved to do. As I grew older I learned I could build a career based on my interests.



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One of the plants Adán uses in his research. Its scientific name is A. thaliana.

Describe a typical day at your job.

On a normal day, I ride my bicycle to the university, where I have an office and a laboratory. In the office, I work on my computer to write stories about our research findings, prepare for class, analyze data from experiments, and meet with students and colleagues.

Periodically during the day, I may go into the lab to talk with my students who also have their own research projects. I also sometimes go to our special growth rooms and greenhouse where we grow plants under specific temperatures and light conditions.

Describe a time in your career when something did not go as planned.

Many experiments we do in the laboratory don't work as we've planned them. Sometimes the results are confusing or unexpected. When this happens, we make adjustments to our experimental plan, if needed, and then repeat the experiment. Repeating the experiment gives us more confidence in the experiment's results. However, if the results still don't answer the scientific question we are asking, we can choose to dramatically change our approach. We learn from these experiences even when experiments "don't work."

What advice do you have for students today?

Be courageous in trying new things, even when work is difficult. Persistence in something that is new and challenging can bring satisfaction in learning because you were able to do something you've never done before.

Also just because no one else around you is interested in what you are interested in, it does not mean that you should change your interests. Rather, you've identified what makes you happy and unique.