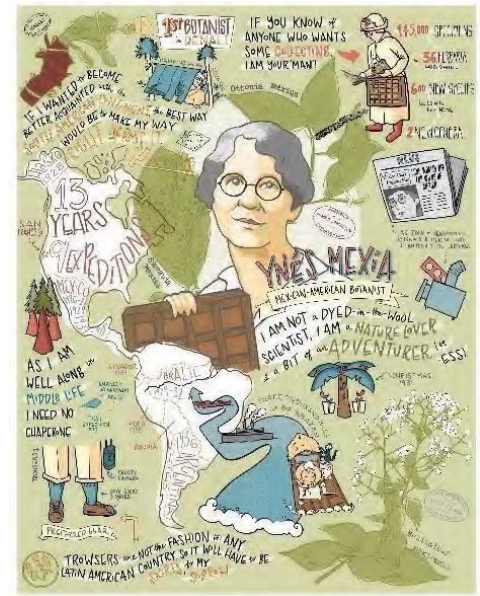


Ynés Mexía (1870 – 1938)

Despite being considered one of the most successful botanists and female plant collectors of her time, Ynés Enriquetta Julietta Mexía didn't begin her scientific career until she was 55 years old. The child of high-status families from both the United States and Mexico, Mexía lived a privileged life. While not much is known about her childhood, her parents eventually divorced, and she went to live with her father in Mexico. A very introverted child, Mexía spent much of her time reading, writing, and adventuring outdoors. When her father passed away, she inherited the family ranch. There, Mexía worked with her first husband until his untimely passing, and her second until he bankrupted it. In poor mental health, Mexía moved to San Francisco where a medical provider prescribed physical activities. Mexía joined the Sierra Club and Save the Redwood League and became incredibly active in efforts to save these trees. At the age of 51, Mexía returned to school—a concept that was then almost unheard of—to study botany.



Mexía's plant collecting trips began in 1925. Her expeditions took her to various locations in North and South America, including the Andes Mountains and the Amazon rainforest, where she ventured into remote and challenging environments to collect samples. She participated in at least eight expeditions during her 13-year career and was the first botanist to explore and collect many of the species in Denali National Park. A true pioneer in her field, Mexía collected over 145,000 specimens throughout North and South America, and documented 500 that had not previously been known to the West. The genus *Mexianthus* was named after her along with 50 other species. Mexía's work not only expanded the scientific understanding of plant biodiversity but also paved the way for further research in the field of botany.

ABOUT THE ARTIST | Felipe Álvarez de Toledo López-Herrera

Felipe Álvarez de Toledo López-Herrera is an illustrator, graphic facilitator, and art historian. Originally from Spain and Argentina, he moved to North Carolina in 2016 and finally settled in Jamaica Plain, Boston in 2022. His artwork explores the power of combining visuals and text to transmit a message. He is currently working on a children's book about the Andean Bear and a graphic memoir about his latest visit to Argentina. His portrait of Ynés Mexía is intended as a map of her life. It is meant to be read not linearly, but by association. It aims to bring out the person she was, and the many aspects of her life that resonate with his own, while paying tribute, doing justice, and making explicit the contributions of a character who is obscure to many.

Spanish translation coming soon.