



eLIFE – news on life at LIFE

Thursday 17 December 2009

Email to the editors: elife@life.ku.dk

The final deadline for editorial changes is Wednesday before the publication of eLIFE on Thursday.

The online newsletter may be subject to editorial changes.

As regards links in the newsletter, please refer to the Danish online version at the faculty's website http://www.life.ku.dk/Maalgruppe/medarbejdere/life_internt/nyhedsbrev.aspx

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, Editor, LIFE Communications, glb@life.ku.dk

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Life at LIFE

News on the budget cutbacks at LIFE

During the joint meeting on the budget cutbacks at LIFE on Monday 14 December 2009, Dean Per Holten-Andersen explained to a full house why the University of Copenhagen needs to make cutbacks, where the University will be cutting back and what this will mean for LIFE.

On Tuesday 15 December, the framework for the Board's severance pay pool was issued by the Main Joint Consultation Committee. The DKK 15-million pool is earmarked for supplementary compensation corresponding to two months' pay for those employees who are either made redundant or enter into a voluntary redundancy agreement with their head of department.

If you are considering a voluntary redundancy agreement, please contact your head of department as soon as possible, and preferably before Christmas. The department must submit all redundancy agreements to LIFE-HR by 4 January 2010 at the latest.

All employees involved will receive more information on Thursday 7 January 2010, and it is expected that all employees affected will be named and notified by the end of January 2010.

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 17 December 2009

Luckily the tree wasn't discovered by Ohlsen

In 1836, the Finnish botanist and professor, A. von Nordmann, discovered an unknown tree on his travels in the Caucasus mountains. The tree was introduced in Central Europe in 1840 and came to Denmark around 1850, introduced by J.E. Ohlsen who started his career as a market gardener in the Østerbro borough of Copenhagen. While this was before Albertine Ohlsen became a widow, it was at this time that the little seed was sown for the global seed brand known as Ohlsens Enke.

Every year at Christmas time, I can help but think how nice it is that the tree was discovered by and consequently named after Nordmann – just think if Ohlsen had discovered it. Then every Christmas we would ask each other: "Is your tree going to be a Norway spruce or an Ohlsen fir this year?" No... Nordmann fir sounds so much more Christmassy, with allusions to Santa Claus in the far north.

Santa Claus is also a topic of heated debate around the world – at least the question of where he lives is. In Denmark, we know beyond all doubt that he lives in Greenland, but in Finland and many other countries, people actually believe he lives in the North Pole near Rovaniemi in Finland. In fact, in Finland they have even built a huge Santa Claus Village in the area that is open all year round with Santa Claus ho-ho-ho-ing all summer. No summer holidays for poor, hard-working Santa.

The Nordmann fir is sometimes referred to as a European silver fir in the Christmas tree market, and sure enough it is one of the more than 40 different varieties of silver fir found in the temperate climates in the northern hemisphere. However, the true European silver fir, with the Latin name *Abies alba*, is not suitable as a Christmas tree because it has flat needles and grows too fast. But it does make an excellent forest tree, and von Langen's European silver firs in Nørreskoven near Furesø lake lived for nearly 250 years, with the largest tree reaching 47 metres.

The Nordmann fir, on the other hand, makes an excellent Christmas tree. It has full branches with shiny, broad, green needles that do not dry out too quickly, which is a useful quality at Christmas time in that a tree can stand in your living room for almost a month before it starts losing its needles. It is quite a sad sight in the end, but compared to the popular Norway spruce, which starts losing its needles after just three days, it definitely has its advantages.

Christmas tree farming of Nordmann firs is practically an art form, and Danish foresters have made it their specialty. Just check out the Forestry and Landscape website, which features one scientific article after another on Christmas tree farming. While the present article is far from scientific, but I would like to briefly touch upon a couple of the issues they have to deal with, starting with the difficulty of obtaining the right seeds.

Not all Nordmann firs are alike, just like people of the *Homo sapiens* species. There are nearly six billion people on Earth, and with the exception of identical twins, no two people are exactly the same. That is also how it is with the Nordmann fir and, in fact, with all seed-propagated plants. It is possible, however, to narrow the field a great deal by using seeds from one specific area, in seed circles this is called provenance, and the Nordmann fir seeds from Ambrolauri in Caucasus are known for producing the best Christmas trees. It is important that the trees' growth rate is neither too fast nor too slow, that they come into leaf in late spring so that the new shoots are not damaged by the spring frosts and that their girth is not too wide. Furthermore, at least 75 per cent must be usable as Christmas trees, so those little seeds have quite a lot to live up to. Over the years, there has also been a fair share of fraud within Nordmann fir seeds, and because everyone wants seeds

from Ambrolauri, it is tempting to mix them with other unsuitable seed provenances. And it takes around 8-10 years before it becomes clear that the Christmas tree is actually unsuitable as a Christmas tree, so by that time it is too late to file a complaint. But there is probably much more control in the field today, and certified seed lots are also popping up in Denmark as well.

Back when I worked in the forestry/nursery sector, I thought I had found the perfect way to avoid the seed problem – by propagating them from cuttings. I found a perfect Christmas tree, made cuttings and found that they took root easily. However, I later discovered that the cuttings did not grow straight up into the air, as you would expect of a Christmas tree, but rather resembled more and more branches that ultimately just spread out along the ground. Needless to say, I did not become a millionaire as a result of that venture.

But I will tell you a secret – it is actually possible to produce more than one Christmas tree from the same root. Not at the same time, but one tree after the other. This procedure is not intended for mass production, but rather for the hobby gardener. When felling a Nordmann fir, do not chop it down close to the ground, but make sure to leave behind a sizable portion of healthy, green branches all the way around.

The next summer, the branches will rise up and a number of adventitious buds will develop on the trunk and the closest branches. Over the summer they will grow up to 10-20 cm, and these little buds will all have developed nice top buds in preparation for the first circle of branches. The following summer, you should then remove the large side branches, and leaving the best of the new shoots to grow, cut off the remaining shoots. In five-six years, you will, then, have the loveliest Christmas tree that looks just like the original Christmas tree you felled. I have personally only grown Christmas trees on the same root twice, but I once knew an old forest ranger who was working, at the time, on his fifth tree.

I ultimately left the nursery/Christmas tree sector and started working at LIFE, so I never got around to trying to make cuttings out of all the fine little surplus shoots. But I am almost certain they would have grown into lovely Christmas trees. Maybe someone else has tried. If not, I now pass the idea on to you readers.

When choosing between a Nordmann fir and a Norway spruce, some families swear by the spruce because it is a good, old Danish tree. Unfortunately, it is not an old Danish tree; the Norway spruce was introduced in Denmark not long before the Nordmann fir, namely around 1730. Not everyone is aware of this, however, including the director of the Danish movie "Gøngehøvdingen" (The Musketeers), which takes place in the 1600s. In the movie, the brave musketeers hide in a growth of Norway spruces before running out and giving a bunch of Swedes a sound beating.

There is no Nordmann fir in the Faculty's listed garden, only a tiny little tree in area 3. However, it is possible to buy beautiful Nordmann firs at Thorvaldsensvej 57 at the LIFE students' Christmas tree market. And with these words I wish everyone at LIFE – Faculty of Life Sciences a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Kim Greiner, Senior Gardener

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 15 December 2009

Announcements

You can continue to use the red Gyldendal online dictionaries in 2010!

In 2010, you will still be able to look up words in the Gyldendal online dictionaries – <http://ordbog.gyldendal.dk/default.aspx?cookietest=1> – directly from your computer. The Gyldendal online

dictionaries are available for Danish, English, German, French and Spanish and are regularly updated with e.g. financial, medical and legal terminology.

An agreement has now been reached that ensures all University of Copenhagen students and staff access to the Gyldendal online dictionaries for the next three years. You do not need a login, and you can obtain access directly from your University of Copenhagen computer's IP address. From other PCs, e.g. from home, access can be obtained via the Library.

Read more about the Gyldendal online dictionaries, other electronic dictionaries and language guidelines and aids on the English at LIFE page on the staff portal:

http://www.life.ku.dk/Maalgruppe/medarbejdere/services/komm_toolbox/uk_ordliste.aspx.

Kirsten Jenlev, Communications, kje@life.ku.dk

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 17 December 2009

The Wednesday Club: Spring programme 2010

All Wednesday Club meetings start with socialising and coffee at 10 am in the Museum of Veterinary History. At 10.30 am, there is a lecture in the Main Lecture Hall followed by lunch at Gimle. Everyone is welcome.

[See the spring programme 2010 here](#)

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 16 December 2009

What should we call the University's new shared intranet?

In February 2010, the University of Copenhagen will launch a new intranet to replace PUNKT KU. With a single login, you will be able to access shared IT systems, check your email, read University news, share knowledge with colleagues in your group forum and find up-to-date regulations and guidelines. But what should the new intranet's name be?

[Read more about the intranet and enter the competition](#) (in Danish).

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 15 December 2009

Information meeting for new employees

On Monday 11 January 2010, an information meeting will be held for new employees at 9.30-10.30 am in the Main Lecture Hall, 1-01 Bülowsvej 17.

After the meeting, everyone interested is welcome to take a tour of the campus with Kim Greiner as the guide. The tour is expected to end at 12 noon.

Please register by contacting Susanne Magnusson, HR, sma@life.ku.dk by 4 January 2010 at the latest.

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 15 December 2009

Possibility statement replaces medical certificate

Just before the summer holidays, new regulations were adopted in the area of sickness benefits. This has resulted in the following changes:

The medical certificate on unfitness for work, as we know it, has been abolished. It has been replaced by a 'mulighedserklæring' (possibility statement), which is a statement concerning the possibility of you returning to work again. The possibility statement is drawn up by the employee in collaboration with his or her union representative, manager and GP. The possibility statement can cover brief or extended periods of absence due to sickness. The manager is responsible for contacting the employee to draw up a possibility statement.

As of 4 January 2010, the manager must call the employee in for a sickness interview within the first four weeks after the first day of absence due to sickness. The employee should, if at all possible, attend this interview in person. The manager is responsible for inviting the employee to the interview. The employee should have the opportunity to be accompanied by his or her union representative.

Also as of 4 January 2010, the employee may, in connection with sickness, ask the manager to help him or her draw up a retainment plan. The objective of the plan is to explore the employee's options rather than limitations in relation to his or her job. The employee must contact the manager if he or she wants to draw up a retainment plan.

You can read more about the new regulations on the [HR website](#) (in Danish).

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 15 December 2009

Clinic dog seeks home

Are you a permanent employee at the University of Copenhagen or a student at the beginning of your studies, and would you like to give a home and loving care to a brown, male Labrador – born on 3 December and therefore still a puppy? If so, please contact the Department of Small Animal Clinical Sciences. You must be able to pick up the puppy on 28 January 2010.

Please contact Veterinary Nurse Juliet Hyslop Graham by email, jhg@life.ku.dk, if you are interested in adopting a dog who moonlights as a clinic dog.

Please include your telephone number so that we can contact you for a preliminary interview about your motives and background for wanting a dog. You will also be invited to interviews in early January.

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 15 December 2009

University of Copenhagen username is introduced on PUNKT KU

As of 9 December 2009, it has been possible to log on to PUNKT KU with your new digital identity, your University of Copenhagen username (KU-Brugernavn). The use of the University username on PUNKT KU is the first step towards students and staff being able to use the same username and password for the majority of the university IT systems, including the upcoming intranet, for the remainder of their time at the University of

Copenhagen – regardless of whether they change status from student to employee, change jobs within the University or change their name. Read more on the [Group IT website](#) (in Danish).

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, glb@life.ku.dk – latest update 14 December 2009

Education

E-learning Course: Applied Statistics for Researchers

E-learning course, 17 February–14 May 2010. Do you regularly come across statistical assessments in your work and want to know more? This course may help you.

Statistical methods: Tools and understanding for obtaining knowledge from experiments and data

Short description of the course

The course covers 6 modules each running over 2 weeks each. The expected workload per module is up to 25 hours. The topics of the 6 modules are:

- Introduction to R and descriptive statistics
- Populations, samples and statistical fundamentals; comparing groups
- Curve fitting and regression
- Factorial experiments
- Analysis of count data and binary data
- Models with random effects and repeated measures

A quick basic review of statistical concepts is included in the first two modules, but the course then quickly progresses to a more advanced and realistic complexity. With the help of the statistical software R, you will have the opportunity to try the various methods through examples, exercises and discussions.

Examples are mainly from the bio-sciences. This angle of applications also affects the content of the course.

Diploma

To pass the course and earn a diploma, you are expected to submit practical assignments, typically with analysis of data, participate actively in discussions and time-synchronised group work and respond to a number of multiple choice questionnaires with a sufficient degree of skill to document your learning. Thus, diplomas are not issued for participation alone.

Starting level

You should have passed an introductory course in statistics and, during your work, have frequently encountered statistical analysis and assessments such as p-values, confidence intervals, t-tests and standard errors. You sometimes carry out statistical analyses yourself, but may be uncomfortable with it and want to learn more.

If you are in doubt about your level, try the questionnaire at www...life.ku.dk

Practicalities

You need to have a PC with facilities to read common formats like pdf and PowerPoint, and to have a reasonable connection to the Internet. A webcam may be an advantage for interactive sessions, but this is not currently expected or demanded.

Modules typically run from Monday one week until Tuesday the next, with feedback, non-mandatory follow-up discussions and time to 'recover' during the remaining part of second week.

Over the six modules there is a considerable work load, but it is taken into consideration that you may be prevented from activities for an unspecified number of days due to work or for other reasons. Not participating for an entire week may be problematic.

Registration and course fee

Please sign up by mail to Ditte Carlsen (dittec@life.ku.dk) by mid-January 2010, at the latest. The course fee is DKK 10,000 (Danish kroner). The number of participants is limited to 30. Selection among timely applications takes place primarily on a first-come first-serve basis, secondarily on regional and occupational distribution of participants.

Instructors

Statisticians at the Department of Basic Sciences and Environment, Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Copenhagen

Course organiser: Professor Ib Skovgaard, ims@life.ku.dk

LIFE students solve plastic problem

On Tuesday 15 December, 11 students from LIFE presented their plan for a more climate-friendly way to deal with the many millions of hard plastic containers from cosmetics, cleaning supplies and foods received by Denmark's largest environmental company, Vestforbrænding, every year. The business collaboration is part of a series of initiatives at LIFE intended to help students, through close collaboration with the business community, innovation workshops and internships, find out how best to bring their knowledge and competencies into play in the labour market.

[Read the press release](#) (in Danish).

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 15 December 2009

Research

Seminar: The many challenges of the H1N1 vaccine

The Section for Clinical Drug Development is hosting the seminar: "H1N1 vaccinenes mange udfordringer" (The many challenges of the H1N1 vaccine), FARMA, Universitetsparken 2, Aud. A3, Wednesday 13 January 2010, 4.30-7.30 pm. [See the programme here](#) (in Danish).

Registration via email to Marianne Pedersen mp@pharmadanmark.dk by Monday 11 January 2010 at 12 noon, at the latest.

Gudrun Lau Bjerno, gib@life.ku.dk – latest update 16 December 2009

Research funds etc.

See the updated information on the Research & Information website.