

SPRING CLEANUP

My wife says I am a packrat, and I probably am. We all are to some degree, but when it comes to computers, I doubt that I ever throw anything away. My mother-in-law thinks my brain must be getting full, but I always seem to find room for something else. However, my office is a bit cluttered and my hard drives are bulging with things I have found but haven't found time to test. This issue of the TekJournal will hopefully help me test a bunch of this stuff and pass the good things onto you.

I subscribe to lots of e-zines and other newsletters to keep abreast of new technologies, software advances, and the industry in general. As a result, I have many (at least 10) CD's full of freeware and shareware that I thought was great when I first saw it, but haven't thought about in months.

Last issue I offered a Spring Cleanup (Tune up) for your systems complete with a copy of Norton 2003 at no additional charge. This was a great deal and many of you took me up on it. Since I really believe it is a great deal, I am extending the offer (TekSpecials). I have been reading other offers of similar deals, and one point that stands out is memory tune up to improve performance. There is no such thing as a memory tune up. RAM is RAM and has no moving parts and no internal memory to be flushed, and therefore can't be tuned. You can tune a Registry, you can clean a hard drive, you can defrag a drive to improve finding things, you can eliminate background processes that eat up cycles performing tasks that aren't required. But you can't tune memory. It is static.

In this issue I will also identify tools that you can add to your own arsenal to improve the running of your own systems on a regular basis. Spring cleanup doesn't have to happen in the Spring.

SURF'S UP - UTILITIES

I must point out at the beginning of this section that all programs identified herein are to the best of my knowledge classified as freeware. Any program which can modify your system settings or make changes to the configuration of your system is to be used at your own risk. We can take no responsibility for your system should you use any of these programs. You must decide which you are comfortable using, and which you aren't. Also, a proper backup should be made and verified before making changes to any system.

I currently have 481 links in My Favourites inside Internet Explorer. I wonder what they all are, and if they are all still good. Assuming 20 seconds for each link access to see if it is valid, I am looking at a mere 4 hours to check My Favourites. Not bad if you like watching paint dry. A much better way is to use [AMDeadlink](#). If this link fails try here. Just download the program to the desktop, and double click on dlsetup.exe to install the program. Take all defaults and you are ready to go. I will refer to My Favourites here, but this program can also be setup to use Netscape and Opera.

AMDeadlink is a quick little program to check all the links stored in My Favourites. Opening the program will list all of the links you have saved, and it is automatically sorted by folder sequence. Click on the green check mark and all your links will be checked immediately. The error and status column identify which is OK and where there were problems. Error 404 means the link is no longer available. 500 is an error that may mean you need to supply a password to make it work properly. Highlight the duds, do a mass delete, and your Favourites will be streamlined and up to date.

If you are like me, you have to remember over 150 passwords to get access to most of the sites you visit. I realize this is excessive, but I keep my passwords in a secure database for easy retrieval. However, how many have forgotten passwords that they needed to know? I can swear that almost every system I have reinstalled has at least one where the user says "I don't Know?!". As long as you can open the dialog box that requests the password, and that password is displayed by a series of

asterisks, this program is for you. [Asterisk Key v5.5](#) is a program designed to recover those passwords hidden under the asterisks. Like email passwords. Open the dialog box with the annoying asterisks, open the Asterisk Key program, click on Recover, and voila the password will be revealed. This is better than the Magic 8 Ball.

Many small businesses would love to have a photocopier but can't justify the cost. Printers are relatively inexpensive, as are entry level scanners. If there were only an easy way to combine the two. Enter [iCarbon!](#) iCarbon is a neat little program that identifies and links your scanner and printer on startup. This interface is then used to select the number of copies to produce, set the scan quality, increase, reduce or leave the copy the same size, even change the contrast. The computer the software is installed on must have the scanner attached to it or the software won't load. I tried this on my system and the scanner used was attached to the primary, while the printer was accessed via the network. Great little utility.

On the trail of great little freeware app's comes [Adios Pop-Ups](#) currently at version 1.3.5. I was helping my wife find an anniversary card for a friend and pop ups were happening faster than I could stop them. So I went into my bag of tricks and installed this little program and poof! no more popup's. It was great. After we found and sent the card I tried to access this newsletter. Adios was so good, I couldn't access this page. I then right clicked on the icon in the system tray, and selected Show Main Screen. On the Main Screen I was able to set preferences including Ask for action whenever a potential popup appears. I turned this feature on, accessed the newsletter, and it asked me what to do. I clicked Always Allow. Then I turned off the ask me feature. Now all the popup's are gone, and I can still access the newsletter from my main web site. NOTE* There also seems to be a [Pro Version](#) available for \$8US, but I am going to stick with this one.

In my travels looking for the best Freeware available, I found two utilities that may be of interest to a select number of users. The company is called [Wisdom Software](#) and they offer interesting applications, two of which are absolutely free.

If you ever have a need to capture all or part of a screen, when an error appears for example, the free version of Screen Hunter will fill the bill. This little app can be started and sits in the system tray. When you want to capture a screen, press the Print Screen key. You will then be presented with a set of cross hairs. Use your mouse to move the cross hairs to the top left corner, press and hold the left mouse button and drag to the bottom right. Let go of the mouse button, and the section of the screen you saved will be saved on your hard drive in a jpg graphic format.

The second application is for those users who want to know information about their system. It is called Quick Sys Info, and when run gives a menu driven look into the operation of the system. The main screen identifies system, directories, processor, drive, display, and memory information. Successive buttons reveal information about the network resources and applications currently in use on your system. It may be helpful to find out which applications are hogging the memory or system resources which slow down your system.

Internet Explorer is a fairly useless tool for viewing your pictures with. It is extremely limiting, but it is free. It came with the operating system. There are better packages available, but they cost a lot of money - Adobe, ACDSee, etc. Here is a great alternative - [Irfanview Viewer and Converter](#). You can't edit the picture per se, but the app handles many different formats, and allows you to open in one format and save in a different format.

I know I am not suppose to mention software I haven't used, but just this once I will. There is a link on the Irfanview page to a program called [Mail Washer](#). I have had this program for several months and just haven't had time to install it. But then I rarely get SPAM on my personal or business accounts,

just a ton on Hotmail. Anyway, according to the website “MailWasher is a powerful email checker with effective spam elimination. Discover the safe way to stop unwanted viruses and e-mails before they get to your computer.” Anyone who gets a lot of unwanted email might find this is the answer to your prayers.

I have had this happen so many times during an install of a new system, it no longer amazes me. Once most people set up their email, they forget their password. They don't write it down, or if they do, they forget where it is. Then comes the joy of calling your ISP and waiting for an hour or so to either get your password or get it reset. Not anymore! [Mail Password Recovery](#) is a tool I found today which recovers your email password from behind the dots or asterisks. I have tried it and it works great. I am adding it to my arsenal right now.

My mother-in-law might just be right. I found a few more app's to include that I may have told you about before, but are worth mentioning again. The first is [Favourites Manager](#), to manage your Favourites of course. It presents your My Favourites folder in a Windows Explorer type screen allowing you to move, rename, delete, etc. any of the entries as if you were doing it from Windows Explorer. I use this program quite frequently.

Another program I use fairly regularly to check Internet Settings specific to the physical card and internal to the registry, without having to actually edit the registry, is [Dr TCP](#). Since there is no real manual per se, this link identifies each of the options within the program and explains what they are. There is also a link on this page where you can download a [copy of the program](#).

For now, that is a healthy peek inside my toolkit. It obviously doesn't list everything I use to fix software and configurations inside a system, some thing must be left a mystery.

TWEAKS

Tweaks are to be used at your own risk. Remember to make a backup of all data that will be affected by the tweak, especially the registry. Windows seems to have been designed to be a safe environment for running your programs. Right out of the box it does this quite well, but there are some of us who can't sit by and not tinker with the settings. Since we don't all think like the programmers at Microsoft, we like to tweak, or modify, settings to make the operating system do what we want it to do. Windows offers what seems to be an unlimited amount of options to change the environment, primarily thanks to the registry. Here are a few more...

Add a Sticky Note to Windows

Using Windows Explorer choose View, Folder Options or Tools, Folder Options, depending on your version. Click the File Types tab, and then select New or New Type.

Windows 98 - type stky in the 'Associated extension' text box, and Sticky Note in the 'Description of type' box.

Windows Me, 2000, or XP - type stky for File Extension, and click OK. With the 'stky' extension selected in the 'Registered file types' list, click Advanced. Type Sticky Note in the box next to the Change Icon button.

In all versions of Windows - click the New button, type open in the Action text box, and enter notepad.exe in the 'Application used to perform action' box. Click OK. Now if desired you may change the associated icon via the Change Icon button.

Edit the Registry - Click the plus sign next to 'HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT', locate and right-click the

key named .stky, and choose New, Key. Type ShellNew and press Enter. Select the ShellNew icon in the left pane, right-click inside the right pane, and choose New, String Value. Type NullFile, press Enter, and exit the Registry Editor.

NOTE** Make sure that your system is set to hide file extensions of known types.

When you right click for the Context Menu now there will be an option to create a Sticky Note. Click on it and enter up to 254 characters to remind yourself to do something or whatever you want the sticky for. If you need more than 254 characters, you can open the file and put more info into the Notepad file.

Neat Trick Microsoft Never told you about

In every Windows installation, there are programs added during the initial install you either don't know about, or can't remove no matter what. Until now, maybe. Many people don't want MSN Messenger running on a business computer, but until XP it was always there. If you want to remove an option that isn't listed in the Windows Add Remove list, follow these instructions at your own risk.

Navigate to the Windows/inf directory and locate a file called sysoc and immediately make a copy of it. Next, Open the sysoc file and locate the component you want to remove, like msmsgs for MSN Messenger. At the end of the line there will be the word HIDE between two commas. Remove the word HIDE but leave the commas beside each other like this ,. Save the file, and exit. Next go to Add Remove Programs and select Windows Components. The previously hidden option is now visible.

Some of the hidden programs can be removed, I removed Pinball because it takes up space I don't use, and some can't. Be careful using this feature and always make backups.

Quick Windows XP Tips

Turn Off File Names in Thumbnail View

Find that you need more space for thumbnails and would like to turn the file names off? Hold down shift when you open a folder or when you switch into thumbnail view. This will turn off the file names, giving more space for the thumbnails. Doing it again turns them back on.

Add a Map Drive Button to the Toolbar

Do you want to quickly map a network drive, but can't find the toolbar button? If you map drives often, use one of these options to add a Map Drive button to the folder toolbar in My Computer.

1. Open My Computer, right-click the toolbar, then unlock the toolbars, if necessary.
2. Right-click the toolbar again and click Customize.
3. Under Available toolbar buttons, locate Map Drive, and drag it into the position you want on the right under Current toolbar buttons.
4. Click Close, click OK, and then click OK again.

You now have a drive mapping buttons on your My Computer toolbar, so you can map drives from any folder window. To unmap drives, follow the above procedure, selecting Disconnect under Available toolbar buttons.

Changing Thumbnail Options

You can change the size of the Thumbnails view in My Computer by opening up the Registry Editor (regedit.exe) and navigating to the following location:

Current user only:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER \ Software \ Microsoft \ Windows \ CurrentVersion \ Explorer

All users:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE \ Software \ Microsoft \ Windows \ CurrentVersion \ Explorer

Add a new DWORD value called ThumbnailSize and give it a hexadecimal value that is between 32 and 256, inclusive (that is, the lowest possible value is 32 and the highest is 256): A value of 32 will give you the smallest possible thumbnails, and 256 will give you the biggest.

Add Fields to the Details View of Folders

You can add other columns to the Details view of the files contained in Windows XP folders, such as Comments, Description, Category, and many others. To add new columns:

1. Right-click the column header of the files list, and then click one of the fields listed, or click More.
2. In the Choose Details dialog box, you can reorganize the order of column headers, specify column widths, and add columns to display details for the files in that folder.

When you click the new column header, the width of the selected column is displayed in pixels in the Choose Details dialog box.

Get Rid of Unwanted Balloon Tips

Open up the Registry Editor and expand the tree to display the following key:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER \ Software \ Microsoft \ Windows \ CurrentVersion \ Explorer \ Advanced

Then, created a new DWORD value named EnableBalloonTips and set it to 0x00000000.

The Windows Logo Key

Ever wonder what that funny key between the Control and Alt keys with the flying window on it does? Here are the commands it controls.

Windows: Display the Start menu

Windows + D: Minimize or restore all windows

Windows + E: Display Windows Explorer

Windows + F: Display Search for files

Windows + Ctrl + F: Display Search for computer

Windows + F1: Display Help and Support Center

Windows + R: Display Run dialog box

Windows + break: Display System Properties dialog box

Windows + shift + M: Undo minimize all windows

Windows + tab: move through taskbar buttons

Windows + L: Lock the workstation (or switch to the Logon screen w/Fast User Switching enabled)

Windows + U: Open Utility Manager

Quick Windows 9x Tips

Screen capture

The easiest way to create a full-screen capture in Win95, 98 or NT 4.0 is still by pressing the Print Screen key. That action sends a copy of the screen to the Clipboard. To view the capture, select Start/Run, type MS Paint and press Enter. Once Paint opens, select Edit/Paste to paste the image from the Clipboard into the Paint window. Choose File/Save As to name and save it as a BMP file. (If Paint isn't installed on your PC, you can use another image program, or install Paint from the Add/Remove Programs applet. Open the Windows Setup tab, double-click on Accessories, select Paint and click on

OK.)

Save the display resolution

If you have many users on a system and want to limit access to display settings, use this tip to disable the Display icon in Control Panel, as well as the Properties option when a user right-clicks on the desktop.

To disable this option for a user, open the Registry Editor and go to: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\System

Edit the value "NoDispCPL" (DWORD value) and set the value equal to "1" (without quotes) to disable the Display icon (if the value/key does not already exist, create it). To re-enable the option, delete the above value or set the value to "0". The setting will take effect immediately and does not require a reboot.

Virtual Memory

Many systems may work more efficiently by tweaking the settings. Some settings however are better left untouched. Virtual memory is an often modified setting that probably shouldn't be. To make sure the Virtual Memory settings on your systems cannot be altered, follow these steps.

To set this option, open the Registry Editor and go to: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Policies\System

Edit/create the value "NoVirtMemPage" (String Value) and set the value to "1" (without quotes) to hide the Virtual Memory button, or "0" to display the button. The setting will take effect immediately and does not require a reboot.

Unsigned Active X

While surfing you may come across a site that pops up a dialog box asking you to install something in order to continue or to view the site in a better way. Many people actually click Ok without ever realizing they are adding controls to their system. Not all of these controls are necessarily a good thing. Adding the wrong control could give, or deny, access to the wrong group. So let's say you indiscriminately added some controls and now want to see what you added and can remove. You can't do it via Add/Remove Programs, but it can be done.

Open the Internet Options dialog. On the General tab, press the Settings button. Next, press the View Objects button. It will pop open an Explorer window containing all of the installed ActiveX controls. Careful about what you delete in here; it may be required for the browser to function properly. Right-click an icon to pull up more options, including its Properties (which lists the program's dependencies). While you're at it, in the Internet Properties dialog, be sure to flip to the Security tab and press the Custom Level button to make sure the "Download signed ActiveX controls" option is set to Prompt. "Download unsigned ActiveX controls" should be Disabled.

The Tips Tweaks and Help section of our website <http://www.mbts.mb.ca> will be updated with all the tips and tweaks from the TekJournals so far, and many more that were too long to include, by the end of July 2003.

VIRUS UPDATES

Some people just have too much time on their hands. It seems the writing of viruses has become a hobby for some poor souls, and they are quite prolific at it. Computer viruses don't happen by accident, they are created on purpose. I just wish these people would get a better hobby. But since

they wish to do this, we can be thankful for Norton Anti Virus. I have used many different products to identify and eradicate viruses from systems, and this product always shines thorough as the best. The list of virus warnings currently are rated a severity level 1, which generally means they are an annoyance rather than a major threat, but acquiring them is still a possibility. The current list includes:

W32.Moulo is a worm, discovered on June 19, that copies itself to the hard drive and the floppy disk drive. It uses the same icon as Microsoft Word and is written in Microsoft Visual Basic. It may compromise the security of your system.

VBS.Pet_Tick.N, discovered June 18th, is a Visual Basic Script (VBS) virus that infects HTML files. It creates the file, %Windir%\mylover.exe, and then modifies the registry so that this file executes upon start up. This file is detected as W95.Pet_Tick.gen. It appends itself to any HTML files in the \Windows, \My Documents, and \Internet Temporary Folder directories. With default security settings in Internet Explorer, acknowledge a security warning dialog box before the virus executes.

W32.Randex.C, discovered June 18th, is a network-aware worm that will copy itself as the following files: \Admin\$\system32\msmonk32.exe and \c\$\winnt\system32\msmonk32.exe. The worm will receive instructions from an IRC channel on a specific IRC server. One such command will trigger the aforementioned spreading.

BAT.Snoital@mm, discovered on June 18th, is a batch file worm that will try to delete anti virus software from your computer. It spreads through MAPI-enabled email clients, such as Microsoft Outlook and IRC. The email will have the following characteristics: Subject: Free anti virus program Attachment: Nod32.bat.