Tricks that everyone should know

Linux Tips

No matter how long you have been working with Linux, there is always something new to discover. In Linux Tips we reveal hidden options and provide solutions to common issues. **BY ANDREA MÜLLER**

■ Mozilla Freezes on Suse Linux 9.0

Suse Linux 9.0 users who run Mozilla and the Suse firewall are in for a nasty surprise. The browser freezes on keyboard input, and even small Java applets take ages to load. The new default configuration of the Suse firewall is to blame for this dilemma. Fortunately, there is no need to do without a firewall while the distributor is working on a solution. You can solve the problem by disabling the *Find As You Type* option in Mozilla. Select *Edit / Preferences / Advanced / Keyboard Navigation* to locate the option (see Figure 1). Unfortunately, this also disables the practical option that allows you to search for a keyword in the links on the current page.

If you do not want to do without this Mozilla feature, you can resolve the problem by commenting out all the IPv6 entries in your */etc/hosts* file. IPv6 is the answer to the running out of address space issue, although very few people actually use it at present.

- Open a command line by pressing [Alt-F2], and enter *kdesu kwrite /etc/hosts* to edit the file with root privileges.
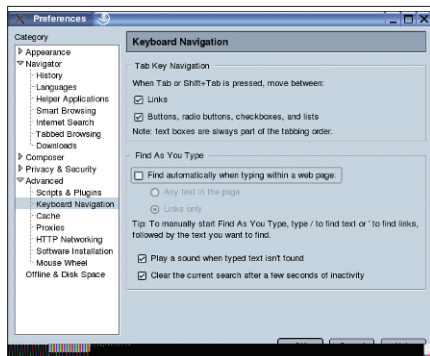- Enter your *root* password when

prompted. Press [Enter] to open */etc/hosts* for editing in the KDE editor.
- Add a pound (hash) sign (#) to every line that has *ipv6* in the second column. This ensures that the remainder of the line will be treated as a comment. Programs simply ignore comments. The file should look like Figure 2 when you're finished.
- Click *Save* and close KWrite.

This will prevent your Mozilla from freezing in future. To restore your *hosts* file to its original state, simply remove the pound (hash) signs from the lines you changed. ■

■ Up-to-Date with Suse Linux

The Suse Watcher icon (the green circle) in the system area of the panel helps you keep your Suse version up-to-date. When you click the icon for the first time, you are asked if you would like to launch *susewatcher* automatically in future. Click *Yes* to open a dialog box with a few options (see Figure 3).

If you selected the *Configure Fully Automatic Update* feature while installing Suse Linux, the *Automatically Check for Updates* checkbox should be checked for anyone apart from modem users. If you use a modem to access the Internet and do not have a flat rate, you should avoid checking the checkbox. This feature only works if you are online 24 hours a day, or have set up dial on demand. You can use the *Check for Updates* icon to perform a manual check instead.

If you notice a red icon in the panel, rather than a green one, this means that the update monitor has discovered some new packages that you should install. To do so

click the *Start Online Update* button in the YaST *Online Update* module.

You can select *Show messages* to view detailed information on updates that involve major changes of previous versions. ■

■ What to do if the Update Icons is Missing

Both Suse and Red Hat Linux use the update tool in the KDE panel to check for new packages for your distribution. You can right-click on the spherical icon, and select *Quit* in the dropdown menu, to remove the update watcher. It isn't difficult to get the icon back, if you know the magic word.

Red Hat users can launch the update tool using the *rhn-applet-gui* command in a command window ([Alt-F2]). If you have version 9.0, the command is also available below *Systemtools / Red Hat Network Alert Icon* in the K menu.

If you quit the update watcher on Suse Linux 8.2, watch out for an undesired side effect. The watcher not only looks for new updates, but also generates icons for your drives. If you remove the watcher icon, this will also remove all the drive icons from your desktop. USB sticks, and digital cameras will not plug & play. You can type *susewatcher* in a command line window to reinstate the useful watcher tool. ■

■ Playing Audio Files with Nautilus

Good news for GNOME users with Suse or Red Hat 9. Newer versions of the Nautilus file manager will play music files from your disk, although this feature is well-hidden. Red Hat users have the
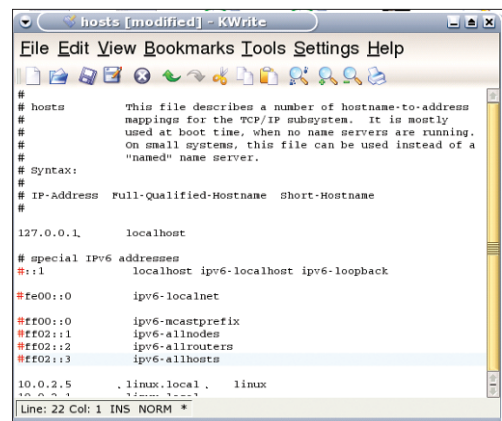

Figure 1: Disable Mozilla's Find As You Type function here.

Figure 2: The IPv6 entries in this hosts file have been commented out.

added disadvantage that the distributor has removed MP3 support from Nautilus. This still allows you to play tracks in Ogg Vorbis format with Nautilus on Red Hat Linux.

- Launch the file manager and navigate to a directory with audio files.
- Open the view dialog box by selecting *View / View as*. In the *Name* field, select *View as audio* and click on *Modify*
- The *Include in the menu for folder items* checkbox will not be checked at present. Instead of checking this checkbox, check the *Include in the menu for "name_of_ current_folder" only*. Of course you could enable the audio view for all folders, but it is fairly useless for folders that contain only text files.
- Click on *OK* and then on *Choose* to complete the configuration.
- The *View* menu now has a new option. Select *View as audio* to use Nautilus as a player.

The file manager displays typical player control elements at the bottom of the window (see Figure 4). You can then click on the play button to play the selected files. To copy the tracks in the current directory to another directory, switch back to the icon or list view.   ■

Figure 3: The susewatcher automatically informs you when updates are released.

■ More Background Images for Suse Linux

The selection of wallpapers in the KDE Control Center is restricted to KDE's own images. Although you may not be aware of this, you have a number interesting wallpapers on your hard disk. Select *Configure Desktop* in the drop down
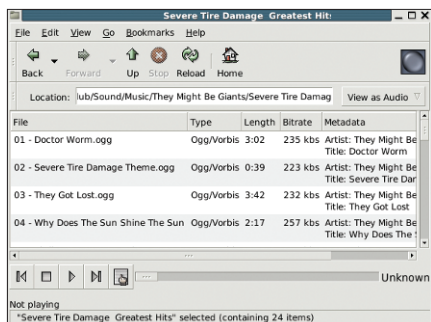

Figure 4: Nautilus can play audio files.

menu for the desktop. In the left column, click on *Background* and then on the *Wallpaper* tab. The *Browse* button takes you to the KDE wallpaper directory. Use the arrow button to navigate to the root level (*/*), and then back down to */usr/X11R6/share/ WindowMaker/Back grounds*. Most of the files in this folder are simple patterns which you can use as desktop tiles. However, there are one or two large format images which make for an attractive wallpaper. The *Linux1.jpg* file (see Figure 5) is a good choice for Linux fans and penguin lovers.   ■

■ Manually Launching the Suse Linux Help Browser

The Suse HelpCenter provides access to the full range of documentation installed on a system, from manpages to the Suse Linux manuals. If you accidentally remove the red and white life-belt from the panel, or simply want to avoid using the mouse while typing, you can press ([Alt-F2]) to open a command window and simply type *help*. It does not get more intuitive than that!   ■

■ Changing the GNOME Desktop Theme

The GNOME desktop provides themes with a variety of window dressings and icons. To change to another theme, first launch the GNOME configuration tool by clicking on *Start Here*, and then select *Desktop Preferences / Theme*. In the *Theme Manager* (see Figure 6), simply select an entry. The screen flickers and reappears with the new window dressing in place.   ■

■ Disabling the GNOME Splash Screen

When launched, GNOME displays a splash screen to show you which desktop components are currently initializing. To disable this gimmick, and thus speed up the startup process, you need to launch *gconf-editor*. Press [Alt-
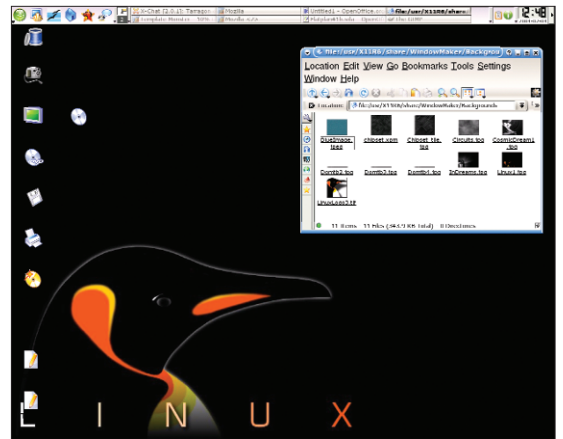

Figure 5: You might be surprised at the number of wallpaper images scattered around your hard disk.

F2] to pop up a command line window, and enter *gconf-editor* to launch the program. In the tree view that appears, navigate to the *apps / gnome-session / options* entry on the left-hand side. Uncheck *show_splash_screen* in the panel on the right, and close the configuration editor. The next time you log on to GNOME, you will not see a splash screen.   ■

■ Displaying the Suse Linux Welcome Screen

When you first logon to a Suse Linux machine after completing the installation, a welcome screen with links to the Suse hardware database, installation support, and the Suse homepage is displayed. The screen also provides access to the *Release Notes* which provide information on the changes since the previous Suse Linux version.

Although you only get to see this screen once by default, you can launch it at any time later. To do so, first press [Alt-F2] to pop up a command line window, and type *SuSEgreeter*. Isn't it a neat thing that Suse Linux likes to make its users feel so welcome?   ■
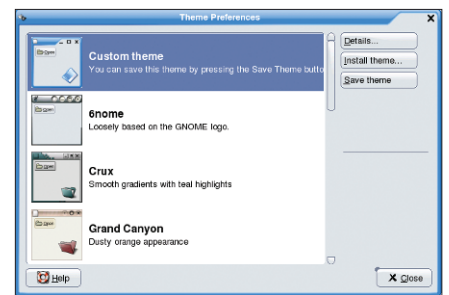

Figure 6: Using the Theme Manager to assign a different scheme to GNOME.