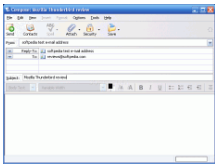


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By: Cosmin Nitu, Editor, Software Reviews



Firing on all cylinders, baby!

Mozilla Thunderbird review

Checking your e-mail can be a burden if you don't have a good e-mail client that can manage your messages effectively. I'm going to cover in this review Mozilla Thunderbird, a small email client that has great potential. **Check mail!** Installing the program is easy and is done quickly; right after the process is completed you will be prompted to import the settings from Outlook. The interface is similar to Outlook's, which is to be expected, since their job is the same in many aspects. But Thunderbird has its own personality, and the design as well as the functionality has an extra touch. What does one look for specifically when searching for a good e-mail client? Well, for starters if an application claims the throne in this category, it **MUST** have good privacy protection. By default, Thunderbird is set to block remote images and other content in messages that you receive from people you don't know. Since spammers use remote content to detect when and if you've viewed a message from them, and thus to verify your e-mail address, this feature will instantly take care of this problem. You don't have to worry for the pictures that you lose when someone that's not in your address book send them to you, because after the verification is done, you're free to view them (they're not deleted, they're just blocked, an operation you can undo by simply selecting "Show images"). Should you receive an e-mail that contains remote images, an alert that informs you of the blocked items will be displayed, so that you can look into the problem and see whether the sender is safe or not. If this blocking service bothers you, simply disable it and you'll be free to view the remote pictures from all the senders. Using it, though, does not take care of the SPAM crisis that seems to get bigger and bigger; but worry not, because the junk mail filter that Mozilla Thunderbird offers will mark all suspect messages as spam, so that you won't be bothered. Also, if your provider provides spam filters, the program will use them as well, thus increasing your security. If an e-mail gets by the junk mail filter you can simply mark it as spam, and the program will take this as a lesson and remember it the next time an e-mail from the same server will try to bother you. The more you use the program, the smarter it gets in annihilating suspicious messages. Another way of invading your personal space is phishing; this means that mean people try to trick you into giving them your passwords and other private information by creating illegitimate copies of real websites, or by sending e-mails under a fake identity. Thunderbird features an Anti-Phishing protection which will warn you about the scam hazard when it detects a potential e-mail that meets the phishing criteria. Worms and Trojans' main propelling method is represented by email attachments, and it's thanks to webmail servers or email clients that do not provide an attachment scanning service that their effect became so dangerous. Sending an e-mail to a friend isn't as simple as it sounds. Imagine handing over a postcard to a perverted mailman that will read it as soon as you turn around, and find out something about your personal life. This case doesn't apply in our case, because Mozilla Thunderbird features Secure/Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (S/MIME), data signing and message encryption, which will make the information that you send incomprehensible until the receiver gets the chance to read it. This way, it's just like handing over a letter coded by Leonardo Da Vinci. The main menu has an extra item compared to Outlook, namely Go; from here you can navigate to the next/previous mail message, unread mail message or flagged message. A nice feature that I like is the fact that you can have the program remember the passwords for all your accounts, and you can set a master password that will be activated for all accounts. This way you will have both faster and safer access to your e-mails. Installing additional extensions is easy, and all you have to do is go to the Tools menu item, and choose Extensions. You might encounter some

incompatibilities with the extensions that you've installed in previous versions, when updating, or with new extensions, but there are clear instructions as to what should be done in each case on the producer's website. A good email client must have an address book that rises to the expectations. The address book that Thunderbird offers is not the best one I've seen, but it certainly does a good job in organizing your contacts. The program has another great feature, namely the Saved Search folders; these may look like ordinary folders, but they're not: you can configure them to search within a folder (and/or subfolder) using a certain criteria and it will return the matching results. This is just like performing a query in your own personal database, having the results updated as your database is populated, without copying or moving any information from its original location. Also, the program allows you to subscribe to RSS feeds, which makes reading the latest news from your favorite websites similar to reading e-mails. You can combine this feature with the Saved Search folders that I've previously mentioned, and read only the information that you consider relevant. Yet another great implementation, in my opinion, is the message grouping. We all like to sort the messages in the inbox, and, in order to improve this action, there is now the option of adding grouping to your sorted messages; this means that folder-like groups will be created, according to the sorting that you've performed. **The good** Mozilla Thunderbird is really easy to use by anyone thanks to its friendly interface, and offers good privacy protection. You can import messages as well as account settings from previous versions, or other email clients, making sure that you won't lose any information with the transfer. **The bad** The only thing that I can consider as being bad is the fact that the help menu is not available offline, as all the menu items in this category direct you to the producer's website. Nevertheless, this is an e-mail client, and the Internet connection is a must. **The truth** It's one of the best email clients I've used, and it's the one I'm going to use from now on! The toolbars are highly customizable, allowing you to easily remove or add any buttons, separator or menu items. I can't believe that this software is free, but even if you'd have to pay for it, I would still recommend it as a great download. *Check out the screenshots below to see the program in action: Installing: Working with the program:*