

[Stay in Sync with GCal and Thunderbird.](#)

@Update: 2nd November, 2007: Updated guide for Lightning v0.7 and Provider 0.3.1 releases.

For a long time I have been looking for a rock solid calendaring system. I've gotten too used to working for companies who have Microsoft Exchange (or, God forbid, [Scalix](#)) installed which allow me to edit and update a calendar from multiple locations and even sync it with my Mobile Phone. When I first heard of [Google Calendar](#) I hoped that I would be able to enjoy such benefits again, but I am not a great fan of web-apps, and prefer a nice, solid desktop client to do my email / organisation from.

Queue [Lightning, the calendaring extension for Thunderbird](#) which brings the desktop email app one step closer to becoming a viable alternative to Microsoft Outlook. Installation can be a little bit confusing and you must remember that this add-on is still in the 0.x stages, so may be a tad unstable at times (but that's ok, we love this kind of thing!)

Open up Thunderbird (I am using the [2.0.0.6 release](#)) and on the Top Menu, go to:

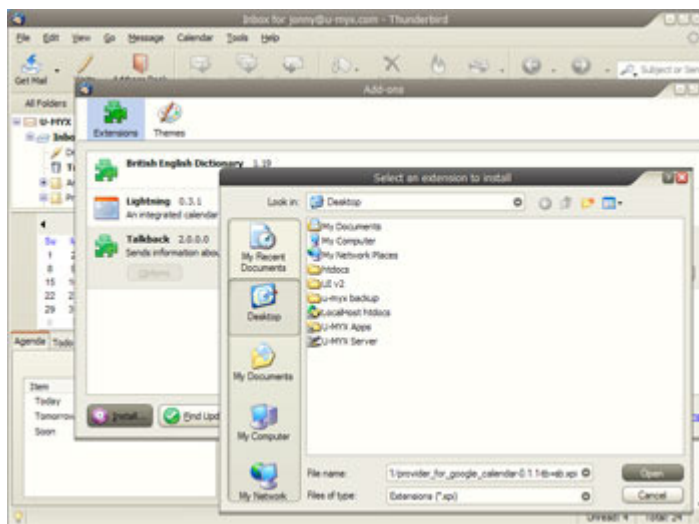
Tools -> Add-ons

When the Add-ons window opens, click on the Install button on the bottom left and paste in the following URL to install the latest release of Lightning (Windows Only, Linux / Mac users will need to get this link by copying the XPI download path from the Mozilla Add-on repository, located [here](#)).

Win32 Lightning Add-On XPI Download Link:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/thunderbird/downloads/file/20424/lightning-0.7-tb-win.xpi>

If you get a warning similar to "Lightning could not be installed because it is not compatible with Firefox" then you are trying to install the XPI directly into Firefox. Instead, you need to either "open" the link from inside the Thunderbird Add-Ons Install Window, or save the XPI to your desktop and then drag it into the Thunderbird Add-Ons Window.



Once you have installed the Lightning Extension, Thunderbird will ask you to restart. Upon restarting you will be greeted with a new Sidebar on the right displaying tasks and events and a tool bar underneath your folder list.



This is all well and good and provides us with an easy to use local calendar, but that's not much use if you wanted to update it at work, or on the road / mobile device. This is where the [Provider Add-on](#) comes in to play.

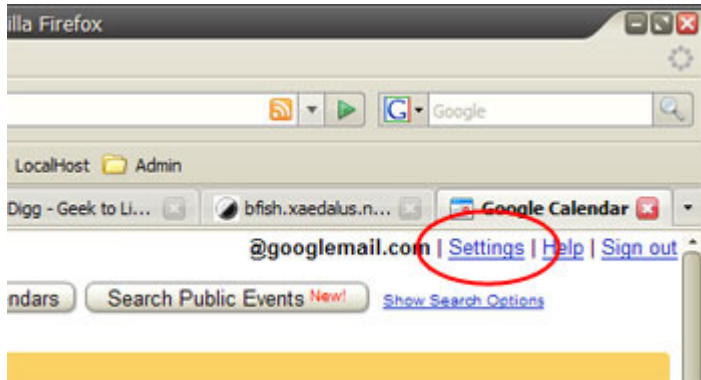
Provider allows bidirectional syncing between the Lightning Calendaring Extension in Thunderbird and Google's GCal Service. This is possible because Google, being the lovely chaps that they are, decided to opt for the [iCalendar standard](#) in GCal, well done chaps :)

Installation of Provider is pretty similar to that of Lightning. Again, go to the Add-ons Window (Tools -> Add-Ons) and Install the XPI available for download from [Provider's Page in the Mozilla Add-on repository](#).

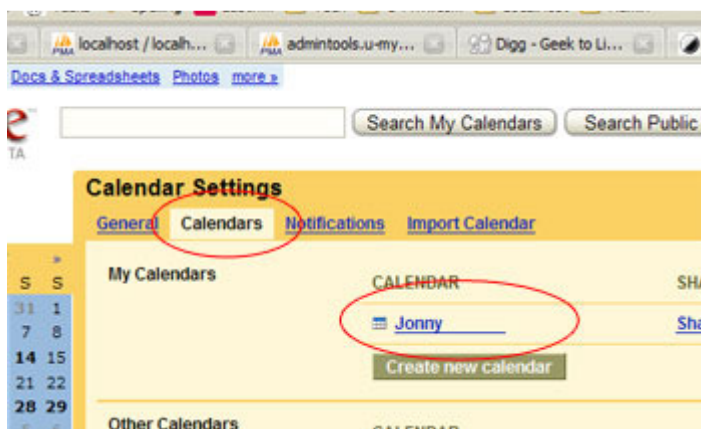
Win32 Provider Add-On XPI Download Link:
https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/thunderbird/downloads/file/20552/provider_for_google_calendar-0.3.1-tb+sb.xpi

Again, once installed, Thunderbird will have to be restarted.

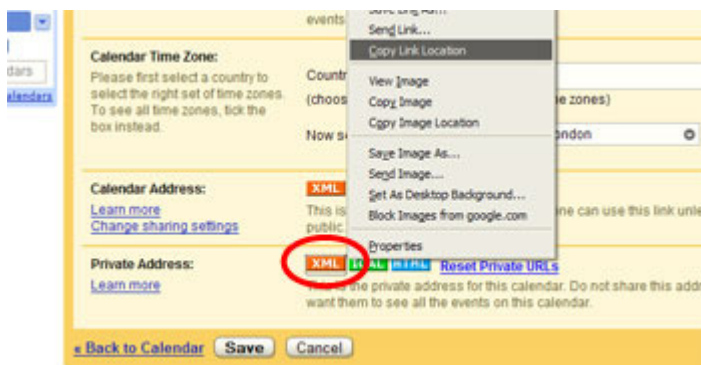
Now, the last piece of the Pie is to tie our Google Calendar into our Lightning Calendar. First of all, you will need to log into your Google Calendar account. Once you are at the main page, click on "Settings" from the Top Right Menu:



Once on the settings page, you need to drill down into the "Calendars Settings" screen and then click on your Calendar from the list (I only had a single calendar.)

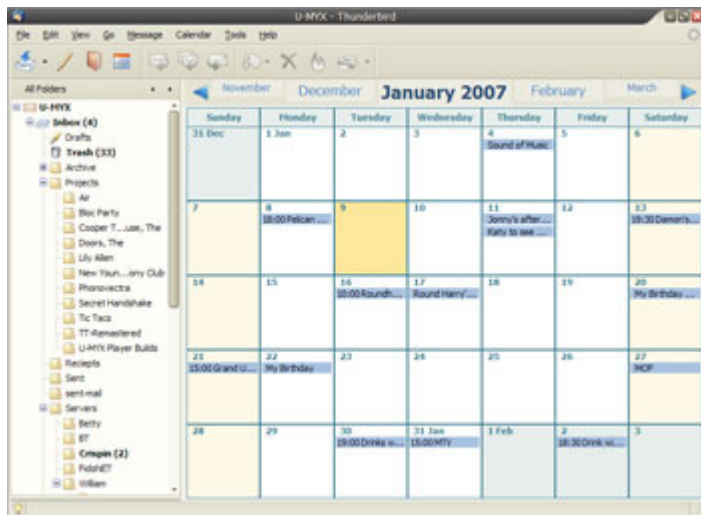


Now, finally, you need to copy the URL of your Private Address XML Feed into the clipboard.



You're done in Google Calendar for now and we can head back to Thunderbird to finally wrap this tutorial up ;). Once you are back in Thunderbird, you need to create a new calendar in Lightning. You can do this by clicking on the following Menu item:

File -> New -> Calendar...



Further Reading

- [Provider Entry in the Mozilla Wiki](#)

posted by Jonny | at 11:31am on April 12th 2007