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Keeping programs up to date with UniGetUI

by Chris Taylor

One of the pillars of computer security is keeping up to date on security patches. It is almost axiomatic to say all software contains security vulnerabilities. Vendors (hopefully) find the vulnerabilities and fix them before the attackers do. But you still have to get those patches installed on your computer.

Microsoft has *Windows Update* and any apps installed through the *Microsoft Store* can auto-update. Some programs, such as web browsers, do a good job of keeping themselves updated. Some programs provide a menu option such as *Help > About > Check for updates*. Some—WinRAR comes to mind—do a terrible job. In November 2023 a security vulnerability in WinRAR was discovered and patched. Unfortunately, WinRAR had no way to auto-update. It didn't even have a way to check for updates through a menu option. You had to manually update the program, assuming you even heard there was a security vulnerability!

Each software vendor must engineer its own method of updating. In short, patch management in Windows is a mess.

Over the years, a number of programs have sprung up to tackle the problem. *Update managers* check the software installed on your computer to see if there is a newer version available. A few programs, known as *vulnerability managers*, check specifically for *security vulnerabilities*. I am most concerned about security vulnerabilities rather than updates for features, performance and the like.

I have used the (wonderful, but now defunct) *Secunia Personal Software Inspector*, *Glarysoft Software Update*, *Patch My PC Home Updater*, and *SecTeer VulnDetect*. All have been helpful, but none tracked all the software I have installed.

In May 2021, Microsoft released the *Windows Package Manager* (WinGet) as an open-source project. WinGet provides a means of installing and updating of programs. Being a command-line program, WinGet can be scripted and scheduled, allowing for automatic updating of programs in the WinGet repository.

The concept of a software repository is so powerful that many software vendors started adding their programs to the WinGet repository, which now includes over 9,000 programs.

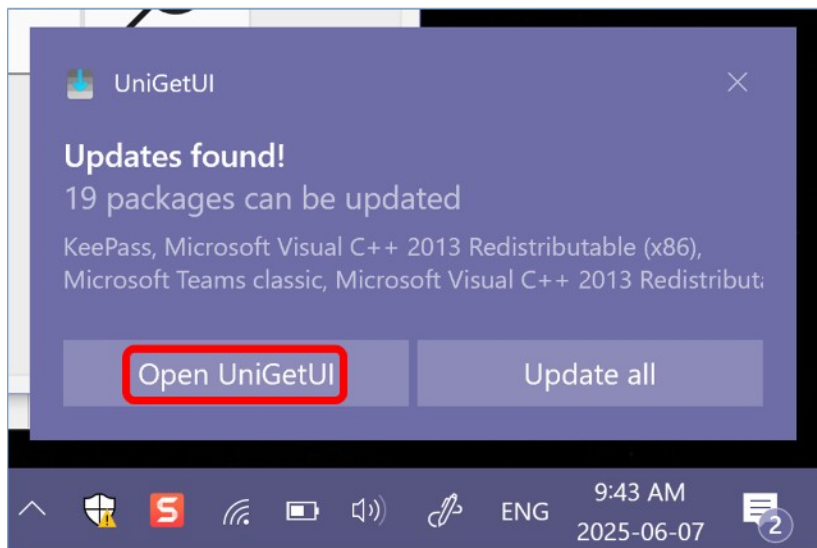
Unfortunately, many Windows users shy away from command-line utilities and scripting. So, while WinGet is a capable way to keep software up to date, it does not get a lot of traction. In August 2022 Martí Climent, tackled this problem by releasing the open-source project WinGetUI, a graphical user interface front end to WinGet. In 2024, it was renamed to UniGetUI when additional software repositories were added.

Browse to <https://www.marticliment.com/unigetui/> to install UniGetUI. Several sources are available, but probably the easiest is the button pointing to the Microsoft Store.

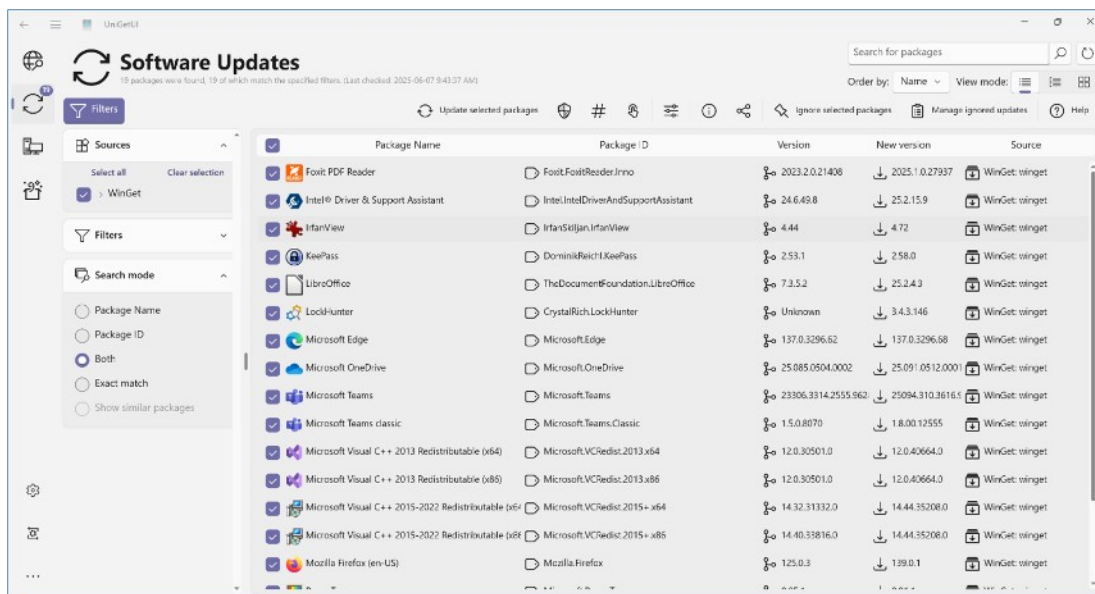
UniGetUI installs to the system tray, in the bottom right of the taskbar, near the clock.



It will pop-up when there are programs on your computer with updates available. Don't be surprised if the first time it runs, it finds a huge number of updates!



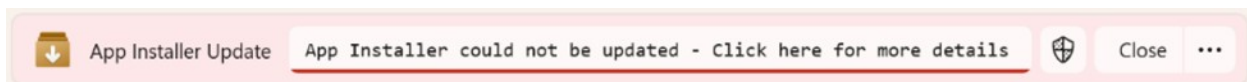
Click the tray icon or *Open UniGetUI* in the pop-up to open the program.



There is a lot of depth to UniGetUI, but the main areas are:

- update all selected by clicking the *Update selection* button
- ignore any updates by clicking *Ignore selected packages*
- in the left panel:
 - *Discover Packages* lets you search for other programs in the software repository and install them
 - *Installed Packages* lets you see all programs installed on your computer with version numbers and whether they are managed through UniGetUI. Any program with *Source* listed as *Local PC*, may not be updated by UniGetUI.
 - *Settings* has many configuration options for UniGetUI, including what software repositories are used (I recommend at least WinGet, but check to see if any others make sense for your situation), frequency UniGetUI checks for updates (the default is every 10 minutes, so you might want to change this to something more reasonable like once a day), whether you want updates to be applied automatically, and much more. Be sure to explore the capabilities.

I have had periodic failures updating some software through UniGetUI.



Following the instruction to *Click here for more details* never helped me decipher what went wrong nor solved the problem! Click the chevron to the right of *Update selection* and choose *Interactive update*, which usually allows the update to complete properly. If it still fails, I click the *Ignore selected packages* and then look to update the program through another means such as installing the latest version from the vendor's website.

Is UniGetUI a panacea? Not really. There are programs that are not in any software repository, especially commercial software. But with over 9,000 programs in the *WinGet* repository, there is a good chance most of the programs on your computer are covered. And it certainly helps: it is a very rare week that goes by without UniGetUI updating at least a couple of programs on my computers.

More details about UniGetUI can be found on Martí Climent's website at <https://www.marticliment.com/unigetui/>.

I gave a presentation on UniGetUI at Q&A on October 22nd. I covered a lot more of the details on how to use it. You can access the slides at https://opcug.ca/qa_recordings/20251022_PowerPoint.pdf and the audio track at https://opcug.ca/qa_recordings/20251022_Audio.mp3.

Bottom Line

UniGetUI (free and open source)

Version 3.3.6

Martí Climent

<https://www.marticliment.com/unigetui/>

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