# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................................... xi
About the Author ......................................................................................................................................... xii
Overview of What Is in This Book ........................................................................................................... xiii
Introduction .................................................................................................................................................... xiv
How to Use This Book .............................................................................................................................. xiv
Vector Graphics ................................................................................................................................................. xv
SVG ................................................................................................................................................................. xvii
The Inkscape Program ................................................................................................................................. xvii
Help ................................................................................................................................................................. xviii

1. Quick Start ......................................................................................................................................................... 1
   The Anatomy of the Inkscape Window ........................................................................................................... 1
      Dockable Dialogs ........................................................................................................................................... 4
   The Swedish Flag—A Short Example ........................................................................................................... 5
   The European Flag—A More Elaborate Example ........................................................................................... 16
   A Hiking Club Logo—An Exercise in Paths .................................................................................................. 19
   The Northern Pacific Railway Logo—A Tracing Example ......................................................................... 31
   A Box for Cards—An Isometric Projection .................................................................................................. 38
   A Can of Soup—A Three-Dimensional Drawing with Gradients ................................................................ 43
   A Vine Design—A Tiling Example ................................................................................................................. 56
   An SVG Button—SVG and the Web ............................................................................................................. 66
   A Neon Sign—Animation ............................................................................................................................... 73
   A Bank Note—Security Features .................................................................................................................. 89
   A Bottle—Photorealism ................................................................................................................................. 101

2. Files ................................................................................................................................................................. 110
   Opening and Saving Files ............................................................................................................................. 110
   Importing Files ............................................................................................................................................. 111
      Open Clip Art Library ................................................................................................................................ 114
   Exporting Files ............................................................................................................................................. 114
      Exporting PNG (Portable Network Graphic) Files .................................................................................... 115
      Exporting Other File Types ..................................................................................................................... 117
   Printing Files .................................................................................................................................................. 128
   Vacuuming Files .......................................................................................................................................... 129

3. Changing the View ......................................................................................................................................... 130
   Panning the Canvas ...................................................................................................................................... 130
   Zooming the Canvas ................................................................................................................................... 130
   Miscellaneous View Commands .................................................................................................................. 131
      Hide/Show .................................................................................................................................................. 131
      Hide/Show Dialogs ................................................................................................................................... 131
      Outline Mode ............................................................................................................................................ 132
      No Filters Mode ...................................................................................................................................... 132
      Full Screen Mode .................................................................................................................................... 132
      Switch Windows ....................................................................................................................................... 132
      Duplicate Window ................................................................................................................................... 132
      Icon Preview ............................................................................................................................................ 133

4. Editing Basics .................................................................................................................................................. 134
   Undo and Redo ............................................................................................................................................. 134
   Selecting Objects ......................................................................................................................................... 134
      Selecting with the Mouse .......................................................................................................................... 135
      Selecting with the Keyboard .................................................................................................................... 136
      Selecting with the Find Dialog ................................................................................................................ 136
   Copying, Pasting, and Deleting Objects ...................................................................................................... 137

Help ................................................................................................................................................................. xviii
SVG ................................................................................................................................................................. xvii
Vector Graphics ................................................................................................................................................ xiv
Inkscape Program ........................................................................................................................................... xiv
Help ................................................................................................................................................................. xviii
### Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clones</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering Objects (Z-Order)</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layers</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Layers Dialog</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Layers Menu</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Status Bar</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Positioning and Transforming</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inkscape Coordinates</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformations</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with the Mouse</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with the Keyboard</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with the Tool Controls Bar</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with the Object Drop-Down Menu</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with the Transform Dialog</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with Paste Size Commands</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transforms with the XML Editor</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapping</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Snapping Objects</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Guides</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grid</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment and Distribution of Objects</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Align</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distribute: Uniform</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distribute: Non-Uniform</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Distribute: Remove Overlaps</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rows and Columns</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Geometric Shapes</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rectangles and Squares</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D Boxes</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Perspectives</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attributes</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellipses, Circles, and Arcs</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Polygons and Stars</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirals</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Paths</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bezier Curves</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Paths</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Pencil Tool</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Bezier (Pen) Tool</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Calligraphy Tool</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Paths from Other Objects</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing Paths</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Using the Node Tool</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Path Offset Commands</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Miscellaneous Path Commands</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path Operations</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Live Path Effects (LPEs)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bend</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct Grid</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelope Deformation</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gears</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatches (Rough)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpolate Sub-Paths</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of Contents

Knot ........................................................................................................................................ 202  
Pattern Along Path (LPE) ........................................................................................................ 203  
Ruler ........................................................................................................................................ 206  
Sketch ...................................................................................................................................... 206  
Spiro Spline .............................................................................................................................. 208  
Stitch Sub-Paths ...................................................................................................................... 209  
VonKoch ................................................................................................................................ 212  

9. Text ..................................................................................................................................... 216  
   Creating Text ......................................................................................................................... 216  
   Entering Regular Text .......................................................................................................... 217  
   Entering Flowed Text ........................................................................................................... 218  
   Selecting Text ....................................................................................................................... 218  
   Editing Text .......................................................................................................................... 219  
   Spell Checking ...................................................................................................................... 219  
   Formatting Text ..................................................................................................................... 220  
      Font Family ....................................................................................................................... 220  
      Font Size .......................................................................................................................... 221  
      Font Style .......................................................................................................................... 221  
      Justification ...................................................................................................................... 221  
      Superscripts and Subscripts .............................................................................................. 222  
      Line Spacing ..................................................................................................................... 222  
      Word Spacing .................................................................................................................... 222  
      Letter Spacing .................................................................................................................. 222  
      Kerning, Shifting, and Rotating Characters ....................................................................... 223  
      Orientation ......................................................................................................................... 223  
   Text on a Path ....................................................................................................................... 224  
   Text in a Shape ..................................................................................................................... 225  

10. Attributes ............................................................................................................................ 227  
   Fill and Stroke Paint ............................................................................................................. 227  
      Flat (Solid) Colors ............................................................................................................ 228  
      Gradients ........................................................................................................................... 237  
      Patterns .............................................................................................................................. 243  
      Custom Swatches ............................................................................................................. 247  
      Fill Rule ............................................................................................................................. 248  
   Stroke Style ........................................................................................................................... 249  
      Stroke Width ..................................................................................................................... 249  
      Join Style ............................................................................................................................ 250  
      Cap Style ............................................................................................................................ 250  
      Dashes ................................................................................................................................. 251  
      Markers ............................................................................................................................... 251  
      Complex Strokes ................................................................................................................ 252  

11. Tweak Tool .......................................................................................................................... 254  
   Tweaking Objects .................................................................................................................. 254  
   Tweaking Paths .................................................................................................................... 255  
   Tweaking Colors ................................................................................................................... 256  

12. Spray Tool .......................................................................................................................... 257  

13. Eraser Tool .......................................................................................................................... 259  
   Eraser Touch Mode ............................................................................................................... 259  
   Eraser Cut-Out Mode .......................................................................................................... 259  

14. Paint Bucket Tool ............................................................................................................... 261  
   Simple Use ............................................................................................................................ 261  
   Filling Fidelity ...................................................................................................................... 262  
   Filling Multiple Regions ....................................................................................................... 263  
   Closing Gaps ......................................................................................................................... 263
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Clipping and Masking</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clipping</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masking</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Filter Effects—Preset</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Preset Filters</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABCs</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevels</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurs</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bumps</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distort</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image Effects</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image Effects, Transparent</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphology</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Realistic 3D Shaders</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overlays</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protrusions</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridges</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scatter</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadows and Glows</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textures</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency Utilities</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Filter Effects—Custom</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Use</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter Effects Dialog</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adding a Filter</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining a Filter</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying a Filter</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Tutorial—A Drop Shadow</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Filter Primitives</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Matrix</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Component Transfer</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compositing Filter Primitives</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blend</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merge</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill Filter Primitives</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tile</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turbulence</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting Filters Primitives</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant Light Source</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point Light Source</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spot Light Source</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pixel Manipulation Filter Primitives</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convolve Matrix</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement Map</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaussian Blur</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morphology</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offset</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex Examples</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table of Contents

- Emboss ................................................................. 311
- Neon ................................................................. 311
- Stereoscopic Pictures ............................................... 312
- Solar Flare ............................................................ 313

### 18. XML Editor .......................................................... 315
   - Basic Usage ......................................................... 315
   - Editing XML Nodes .............................................. 316
   - Examples .......................................................... 317
     - Adding Color to a Marker Arrow .......................... 317
     - Underlined Text ................................................. 317

### 19. Tiling ................................................................. 319
   - Symmetry Tab ...................................................... 320
   - Shift Tab .......................................................... 323
   - Scale Tab .......................................................... 327
   - Rotation Tab ....................................................... 329
   - Blur and Opacity Tab ............................................ 331
     - Blur ................................................................. 331
     - Opacity ........................................................... 332
   - Color Tab .......................................................... 333
   - Trace ............................................................... 335
   - Tricks ............................................................... 339

### 20. Tracing Bitmaps ....................................................... 342
   - Single Scans ......................................................... 344
     - Brightness Cutoff ............................................... 344
     - Edge Detection .................................................. 345
     - Color Quantization ............................................. 345
   - Multiple Scans ..................................................... 346
     - Brightness Steps ............................................... 346
     - Colors ............................................................. 347
     - Grays ............................................................... 347
     - Options ............................................................. 348
   - Common Options .................................................. 349
   - SIOX ................................................................. 350

### 21. Connectors .......................................................... 351
   - Creating Connectors ............................................. 351
   - Modifying Connectors .......................................... 352
     - Connecting and Disconnecting .............................. 352
     - Line Style ........................................................ 352
     - Routing ........................................................... 352

### 22. Extensions ........................................................... 353
   - Arrange ............................................................. 354
   - Restack ............................................................. 354
   - Color ................................................................. 355
     - Black and White ............................................... 355
     - Brighter ............................................................ 355
     - Custom ............................................................ 356
     - Darker ............................................................. 356
     - Desaturate ........................................................ 357
     - Grayscale ........................................................ 357
     - Less Hue .......................................................... 358
     - Less Light ........................................................ 358
     - Less Saturation .................................................. 359
     - More Hue ........................................................ 359
     - More Light ........................................................ 360
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generate from Path</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrude</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inset/Outset Halo</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpolate</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motion</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern Along Path (Extension)</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scatter</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voronoi</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract One Image</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embed All Images</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JessyInk (Presentations)</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Slide</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modify Path</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add Nodes</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Markers to Match Stroke</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convert to Dashes</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edge 3D</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelope</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatten Bezier</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fractalize</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpolate Attribute in a Group</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jitter Nodes</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pixelsnap</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Stretch</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straighten Segments</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirl</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raster</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Render</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D Polyhedrons</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alphabet Soup</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcode</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barcode — Datamatrix</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartesian Grid</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw From Triangle</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foldable Box</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function Plotter</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gear</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grid</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

Guides Creator .......................................................... 393
LaTeX Formula .......................................................... 393
L-System (Fractal-Lindenmayer) ................................. 394
Parametric Curves .................................................... 394
Perfect-Bound Cover Template ................................. 395
Polar Grid ................................................................. 397
Printing Marks .......................................................... 397
Random Tree ............................................................ 398
Spirograph ................................................................. 398
Triangle ..................................................................... 400
Wireframe Sphere ...................................................... 400

Text ........................................................................... 401
Convert to Braille ....................................................... 401
Lorem Ipsum ............................................................. 401
Replace Text ............................................................. 401
Split Text ................................................................. 402
Change Case ............................................................ 402

Visualize Path .......................................................... 403
Dimensions ............................................................... 403
Draw Handles ........................................................... 403
Measure Path ........................................................... 403
Number Nodes ......................................................... 404

Web ........................................................................... 405
JavaScript ................................................................. 405
Web Slicer ............................................................... 407

23. SVG and the Web .................................................. 409
Simple SVG Display .................................................. 410
The <object> Tag ....................................................... 410
The <embed> Tag ....................................................... 411
The <iframe> Tag ...................................................... 411
The <img> Tag .......................................................... 412
Inline SVG ............................................................... 412
CSS Background ....................................................... 413
Supporting Older Browsers ........................................ 413
Positioning SVG ....................................................... 414
Adding Links ............................................................ 416
Using Style Sheets .................................................... 418
Adding JavaScript ..................................................... 419
Simple Animation ..................................................... 421
Inkscape for the Web ............................................... 422

24. Customization ....................................................... 424
Inkscape Preferences Dialog ...................................... 424
Inkscape Configuration Files ...................................... 424
Preferences ............................................................... 424
Custom Templates .................................................. 425
Custom Swatches or Palettes ..................................... 426
Custom Markers ....................................................... 426
Custom Keyboard Shortcuts ....................................... 427

25. Using the Command Line ....................................... 428
General Command Line Options ............................... 429
Export Command Line Options ................................. 429
Format Options ........................................................ 429
Export Region Options ............................................. 430
Export Property Options .......................................... 431
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Query Command Line Options</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Challenges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Spiral</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knot</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squares</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Cone</td>
<td>434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiral Gyral</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Inkview</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. File Format</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default Template File</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVG Groups with Objects</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of Objects</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paths</td>
<td>439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defs</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Spheres</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere with Gradient Shading and Shadow</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere with Hatched Shading and Shadow</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere with Dot Shading and Shadow</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sphere with Text Shading and Shadow</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Solutions for Challenges</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Spiral</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knot</td>
<td>445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squares</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Cone</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiral Gyral</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. List of Dialogs</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Tips for Illustrator Converts</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Mappings</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Index</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index by Menu</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index by Tool</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thanks to the many authors of Inkscape! Here are the top 15 in terms of “commits” to the source code since the v0.48 release: Jon A. Cruz, JazzyNico, Krzysztof Kosiński, Diederik van Lierop, Johan Engelen, Tavmjong Bah, Alexandre Prokoudine, Ted Gould, Josh Andler, Chris Morgan, Kris De Gussem, buliabyak, Alvin Penner, helix84, Aurelio A. Heckert. A special thanks to the students at Ecole Centrale de Lyon who implemented the new Spray Tool. I would also like to thank Ted Gould, who put me in touch with Joe Brockmeier, who put me in touch with Prentice Hall. And a thanks to all the readers (especially Jon A. Cruz and Loïc Guégant) who have sent me comments and corrections.

About the Author

Tavmjong Bah is a physicist living in Paris whose writing combines his love for technology and culture. An active member of the community, Tav is an Inkscape developer and is responsible for the improvements to the Text Tool between versions 0.47 and 0.48. He represents Inkscape as an invited expert in the W3C SVG working group. His *nom-de-plume* is the title granted to him by the paramount chief of the Nso, a Cameroonian people.
Overview of What Is in This Book

*Inkscape, Guide to a Vector Drawing Program* is the guide to the Inkscape program. The shorter, web-based, version is linked directly under the program’s Help menu. This book is both an introduction and reference for the Inkscape drawing program. With Inkscape, one can produce a wide variety of art, from photo-realistic drawings to organizational charts. Inkscape uses SVG, a powerful vector-based drawing language and W3C web standard, as its native format. SVG drawings can be directly viewed by all the major web browsers, including Firefox, Opera, Safari, Chrome, and Internet Explorer (starting with version 9). With the advent of *HTML5*, SVG will be easily embedded in web pages. Inkscape is available free for Windows, Macintosh, and Linux operating systems.

The first third of the book is devoted to twelve tutorials that progress in difficulty from very basic to highly complex. The remainder of the book covers each facet of Inkscape in detail. Updated for Inkscape v0.48, the book includes complete coverage of new features, including: updated Node tool with multipath editing, new Spray tool, improved Text tool, and many new extensions. Advance topics covered include the use of Inkscape’s powerful tiling tool, built-in bitmap tracing, and SVG use on the Web including in *HTML5*. The book includes plenty of tips (and warnings) about the use of Inkscape and SVG.
Introduction

This book serves as both a textbook and a reference for using Inkscape to produce high-quality drawings. It includes a series of tutorials followed by chapters that cover completely each facet of the Inkscape program. The book is full of tips and notes to enable the user to make the best use of the program.

Inkscape is an open source, SVG-based\textsuperscript{1} vector drawing program. It is useful for drawing:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Illustrations for the Web
  \item Graphics for mobile phones
  \item Simple line drawings
  \item Cartoons
  \item Complex works of art
  \item Figures for articles and books
  \item Organization charts
\end{itemize}

The file format that Inkscape uses is compact and quickly transmittable over the Internet. Yet it is powerful and can describe complex drawings that are scalable to any size. Support for the format has been added to web browsers and is already included in many mobile phones.

Inkscape supports the drawing of regular shapes (rectangles, circles, etc.), arbitrary paths, and text. These \textit{objects} can be given a wide variety of attributes such as color, gradient or patterned fills, alpha blending, and markers. Objects can be transformed, cloned, and grouped. Hyperlinks can be added for use in web browsers. The Inkscape program aims to be fully XML, SVG, and CSS compliant.

Inkscape is available prepackaged for the Windows, Macintosh, and Linux operating systems. The program and its source code are freely available. They can be obtained from the Inkscape website [http://www.inkscape.org/].

Inkscape is undergoing very rapid development with new features being added and compliance to the SVG standard being constantly improved. This manual documents versions 0.47 and 0.48.

How to Use This Book

Following this introduction, there is a set of tutorials. The tutorials are designed to cover the basics of all the important features found in Inkscape and to lead the reader from the beginning to end of the drawing process.

The bulk of the book is devoted to a detailed discussion of all of Inkscape’s features, including examples of solving common drawing problems. Both the strengths and weaknesses of Inkscape are pointed out.

Depending on one’s background, one may use the book as a reference or read the book from front to back. In general, the more fundamental topics are covered first. Novices are encouraged to work through each of the tutorials sitting in front of their computer. At the end of the book are a few drawing challenges.

Conventions:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Click}: Click on icon, object, and so forth with the \textbf{Left Mouse} button (unless another mouse button is indicated) with immediate release.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{1} All acronyms are defined in the Glossary.
• *Click-drag:* Click on icon, object, and so forth with the **Left Mouse** button (unless another mouse button is indicated) and hold the button down while moving the mouse.

• Select the option in the pull-down menu. Example: File → Document Properties... (**Shift+Ctrl+D**): Select “Document Properties...” under the “File” pull-down menu. **Shift+Ctrl+D** is the keyboard shortcut corresponding to this option.

**One-button Mice**

Users of one-button mice might want to upgrade to a multi-button mouse. Inkscape makes good use of a three-button mouse with a scroll wheel. (Inkscape also makes good use of graphics tablets.) In the meantime, the button on a one-button mouse corresponds to the **Left Mouse** button.

**Icons**

The icons used in this book are in general those provided by Inkscape’s default icon theme. Some icons, however, are provided by the operating system. It is possible that the icons you see in your version of Inkscape are different depending upon the source of your version. Regardless of what icons are used, the functionality remains the same.

**Book Website and Color Addendum**

The book has a website [http://tavmjong.free.fr/INKSCAPE/] with some *SVG* examples and tests as well as graphics for use with the tutorials.

Being a drawing program, color is very important in Inkscape. You can download from the website a color addendum, which has many of the book’s figures in color. Figures in the book that have a color version in the addendum are marked with the symbol ✪.

**Vector Graphics**

There are two basic types of graphic images: *bitmap (or raster)* images and *vector* images. In the first case, the image is defined in terms of rows and columns of individual pixels, each with its own color. In the second case, the image is defined in terms of lines, both straight and curved. A single straight line is described in terms of its two end points. The difference in these types of graphic images becomes readily apparent when a drawing is enlarged.

The same line is shown on the left and right. On the left it is displayed as a bitmap image, while on the right it is displayed as a vector. In both cases, the line has been scaled up by a factor of four from its nominal size.

When the bitmap resolution of a drawing matches the display resolution, the objects in the drawing look smooth.
The same drawing, but defined as a bitmap image on the left and a vector image on the right. If the output device has the same resolution as the bitmap image, there is little difference between the appearance of the two images.

If the bitmap resolution is significantly less than the display resolution, the display will show jagged lines.

The head of the gentleman in the above drawings has been scaled up by a factor of five. Now one can see a difference in the quality of the bitmap drawing (left) and the vector drawing (right). Note that the bitmap image uses anti-aliasing, a method of using grayscale to attempt to smooth the drawing.
All output devices, with few exceptions, use a raster or bitmap image to display graphics. The real difference between drawing with bitmap graphics and vector graphics is the point at which the image is converted into a bitmap. In the case of vector graphics, this conversion is done at the very last step before display, ensuring that the final image matches exactly the resolution of the output device.

**SVG**

SVG stands for Scalable Vector Graphics. Scalable refers to the notion that a drawing can be scaled to an arbitrary size without losing detail. Scalable also refers to the idea that a drawing can be composed of an unlimited number of smaller parts, parts that can be reused many times.

The SVG standard is directed toward a complete description of two-dimensional graphics, including animation in an XML (eXtensible Markup Language) format. XML is an open standard for describing a document in a way that can be easily extended and is resistant to future changes in the document specification. A drawing saved in one version of SVG by one version of a drawing program should be viewable, to the full extent possible, by any previous or future version of any drawing program that adheres to the SVG standard. If a program doesn’t support something in the SVG standard, it should just skip over any part of a drawing that uses it, rendering the rest correctly.

SVG files are small, and drawings described by the standard adapt well to different presentation methods. This has led to great interest in the standard. Support is included in many web browsers (Firefox, Chrome, Opera, Safari, and Internet Explorer from version 9), or is available through plug-ins (e.g., Adobe [http://www.adobe.com/svg/viewer/install/], Ssrc SVG [http://www.savarese.com/software/svgplugin/], svgweb [http://code.google.com/p/svgweb/] and Google [http://www.google.com/chromeframe]). Over a dozen companies including Apple (iPhone), Blackberry, LG, Motorola, Nokia, Samsung, and Sony Ericsson produce mobile phones that utilize a subset of the full SVG standard (SVG Tiny) that has been tailored for devices with limited resources.

The Inkscape Program

Inkscape has its roots in the program Gill (GNOME Illustrator application) created by Raph Levian [http://www.levien.com/] of Ghostscript fame. This project was expanded on by the Sodipodi [http://sourceforge.net/projects/sodipodi] program. A different set of goals led to the split-off of the current Inkscape development effort.

The goal of the writers of Inkscape is to produce a program that can take full advantage of the SVG standard. This is not a small task. A link to the road map for future development can be found on the Inkscape website [http://www.inkscape.org/]. Of course, you are welcome to contribute!

Instructions on installing Inkscape can be found on the Inkscape website. Full functionality of Inkscape requires additional helper programs to be installed, especially for importing and exporting files in different graphic formats. Check the log file extensions-errors.log located on Linux at ~/.config/inkscape/ and on Windows at %userprofile%\Application Data\Inkscape\ for missing programs.

**Inkscape on the Mac**

On the Mac OS X operating system, the Inkscape interface uses the X11-window layer, available on the 10.4, 10.5, and 10.6 installation disks. The non-native interface lacks the look and feel of “normal” Mac programs. Fear not, it will still work, although starting Inkscape may take a bit longer than other programs, especially the first time. A number of the keyboard shortcuts may also not work out of the box. You can consult InkscapeForum.com [http://www.inkscapeforum.com/viewtopic.php?t=800&f=5] for how to get the Alt keys to work properly and for other Mac related issues.

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2 The few vector output devices include large plotters for engineering and architectural drawings and archaic Tektronix terminals.
Help

The first place to look for help is under the Help menu. Here you will find links to: this book (!), a web page containing all the Keyboard and Mouse commands (Help → Keys and Mouse Reference), tutorials, and a FAQ. Some of the items require a web browser and that you be connected to the Internet.

If you encounter a problem that is not covered by this book or the other resources under the Help menu, here are some other places to look:

- Inkscape website [http://www.inkscape.org/]. A variety of information is available, but it is not always well organized.
- Official Mailing Lists [http://www.inkscape.org/mailing_lists.php]. Inkscape has a friendly Users list. Lists also exist in a variety of languages, including Italian, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.
- The “unofficial” Inkscape Forums [http://www.inkscapeforum.com/].
Chapter 19. Tiling

Tiling or tessellation is the covering of a surface with the repeated use of the same shape tile. A typical example is the tiling in a bathroom. In Inkscape, this concept is expanded to include a multitude of options, including progressively changing the tile size, spacing, and orientation.

The tiles are in reality just clones of the source tile or object. Thus the same methods that apply to clones apply to tiles. (See the section called Clones in Chapter 4, Editing Basics.)

While random use of the Tile Clones dialog can produce exquisite patterns, it is useful to understand the fundamentals of tessellation in order to have more control over the final design.

![An example of using the Tile Clones dialog with a simple calligraphic stroke and the P6M symmetry group (see text).](image)

To construct a tiling, open up the Create Tiled Clones dialog (Edit → Clone → Create Tiled Clones...).

![The Tile Clones dialog with no objects selected.](image)
Symmetry Tab

At the bottom of the dialog is a fixed section where you can choose the size of the tiling either by the number of rows and columns or by the width and height of the area you wish to cover. The terms *Rows* and *Columns* are only really appropriate for tiling of rectangular tiles (see below). Checking the “Used saved size and position of the tile” forces the tiling to use the size and position of the base tile at the last time the tile was used in a tiling. This preserves the spacing between tiles if the *bounding box* has changed due to editing the base tile. Clicking on the *Reset* button resets most of the entries under the tabs to their default values. The *Remove* button can be used to undo a tiling when the base tile is selected. The *Unclump* button can be used to spread out the clones in a somewhat random fashion (can be repeated). And, finally, the *Create* button creates the tiling.

With a circle and the default values (P1 symmetry, two rows and two columns), you will get the following tiling:

![Simple tiling of a circle](image)

The simple tiling of a circle. The symmetry is "P1" and there are two rows and two columns.

The circle has been replicated four times in two rows and two columns. The original circle is still there, under the top-left cloned circle. The *bounding box* of the circle has been used as the base tile size.

This example is not so interesting, but there are many options under the dialog’s tabs that can produce many interesting effects. Each tab will be covered in turn in the following sections.

**Symmetry Tab**

The *Symmetry* tab is at the heart of the tiling process. Understanding the different symmetries is necessary to have full control over the outcome of a tiling. The symmetry of the tiling is selected from the pull-down menu under the *Symmetry* tab (see previous figure).

There are three regular geometric shapes that can be replicated to cover a surface completely (without gaps or overlaps). These shapes are: triangles, rectangles (parallelograms), and hexagons. A complete set of tiling symmetries requires taking these shapes and adding rotations and reflections. It is known that there are 17 such tiling symmetries. (See: Wikipedia entry [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallpaper_group].) All 17 symmetries are included in the Inkscape *Create Tiled Clones* dialog. The symmetries are shown next.
Tilings based on a rectangle tile (or 45-45-90 degree triangle). The outlined dark blue tile is the basic unit. Red and yellow dots show the reflection and rotation symmetries. Points of twofold and fourfold rotational symmetry are shown by pink diamonds and green squares, respectively. The P1 and P2 symmetries also work with parallelograms.
Symmetry Tab

P3: 120 Degree Rotation.

P6: 60 Degree Rotation

P31M: Reflection + 120 Rotation, Dense.

P6M: Reflection + 60 Rotation.

P3M1: Reflection + 120 Rotation, Sparse.

Tiling based on regular subdivisions of a hexagonal. The outlined dark blue tile is the basic unit. All tilings have points of threefold rotational symmetry (orange triangles). Two also have twofold and sixfold rotational symmetries (pink diamonds and purple hexagons). The pairs of numbers indicate the row and column numbers.

The basic tile for each of the 17 symmetries is shown in dark blue in the preceding figures. Inkscape uses the bounding box of an object to determine the basic tile size. For rectangular base tiles, the bounding box corresponds to the base tile. However, for triangular base tiles, the base tile covers only part of the bounding box area. This can result in tiles “overlapping” if an object extends outside the base tile shape (but is still within the bounding box) as in the tiling in the introduction to this chapter. Overlapping can also occur if the base tile is altered after the tiles are positioned.
On the left is a triangle and circle that are grouped together. The triangle corresponds to the base tile for a P6M symmetry. Note that the red circle is outside the base triangle but is still within the bounding box of the group (and triangle). On the right is a P6M tiling with the triangle and circle. Note how the red circle ends up above some but below other triangles as determined by the order in which the tiling is made.

Inkscape always uses the Geometric bounding box to determine the tile size. This avoids problems when creating a triangular tile with a Stroke where the Visual bounding box doesn’t have the same width to height ratio as the Geometric bounding box.

If you need to adjust the base tile size after having created a tiling, you can use the XML Editor dialog to change the parameters “inkscape:tile-h” and “inkscape:tile-w” (these will appear after you have cloned the object and are used only if the Use saved size and position of the tile button is checked).

**Shift Tab**

The Shift tab allows one to vary the spacing between tiles. With the default parameters, rectangular tiles are arranged so that their Geometric bounding boxes are touching. The following options are available to add or subtract space between the tiles:

- **Shift X, Shift Y:** Adds (or subtracts) to the tile spacing in units of bounding box width and height. A random factor can also be added.

- **Exponent:** Changes the exponent factor $z$ so that position of each tile is $x$ (or $y$) = $(1 + \text{“shift”})^z$.

- **Alternate:** The shift alternates between being added and subtracted.

- **Cumulate:** The previous shift is added to the new shift. For example, if there was a Shift X of 10%, normally the space between subsequent tiles would be 10%, 20%, 30%, and so on. With this option, the shifts become 10%, (10+20)% (10+20+30)%, etc. This is useful when one is also scaling the tiles to keep the tile spacing constant. (See the Scale Tab section for an example.)

- **Exclude tile:** The tile width or height is excluded in the calculation of tile spacing. This is useful when using the Rotation option to put tiles on a circle. In this case, it is a shortcut for specifying a −100% shift.
The *Shift* tab of the *Tile Clones* dialog.

A P1 symmetry tiling with a constant shift of 10% (of the bounding box). There is an $x$ shift for each column and a $y$ shift for each row.
A P1 symmetry tiling with a constant shift of 10% (of the bounding box). There is a $y$ shift for each column and an $x$ shift for each row.

A P1 symmetry tiling with an exponential shift of 1.1 (2% shift in $x$ and $y$).
Question: What is the symmetry of closely packed hexagons? The answer is P1 as can be seen below. One can use this fact to trivially generate the board for the game Hex [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hex_%28board_game%29] invented independently by the mathematicians Piet Hein and John Nash.

Closely packed hexagons have a P1 symmetry tiling as shown on the left. On the right is the board for the game Hex. To generate both tilings, a hexagon was tiled using a shift in $x$ of 50% and a shift in $y$ of $-25\%$ per row.
The `Scale` tab allows one to increase or decrease the size of the tiles depending on the row and column position. The following options are available to scale tiles:

- **Scale X, Scale Y**: Scales each tile in terms of percentage. A random factor can be added.

- **Exponent**: Scale each tile with an exponential factor. The nominal scaling $S$ becomes $S^{\text{exponent}}$.

- **Base**: Used to create a logarithmic spiral along with Rotation. The nominal scaling $S$ becomes $\text{base}^{S-1}$ unless base is one in which case scaling remains unchanged. Use a value less than 1 for a converging spiral and a value greater than 1 for a diverging spiral. A true logarithmic spiral would use a base of $e = 2.718$ (or $1/e = 0.368$). See the Tile Tricks section for examples.

- **Alternate**: Alternate scaling up and scaling down tiles.

- **Cumulate**: Scaling is cumulative.

The `Scale` tab of the `Tile Clones` dialog.
A P1 symmetry tiling with a negative scaling. There is an $-15\%$ $x$ scaling for each column and a $-15\%$ $y$ scaling for each row. The scaling is a percentage of the base tile bounding box. The spacing between the center of adjacent tiles remains fixed.

A P1 symmetry tiling with a cumulative negative scaling. There is a $-10\%$ $x$ scaling for each column and a $-10\%$ $y$ scaling for each row. There is also a $-5\%$ $x$ shift for each column and a $-5\%$ $y$ shift for each row. The Cumulate box is checked for both $x$ and $y$. A general rule is that to keep scaled tiles just touching, specify a cumulative shift that is half of the scaling (in percent).
Rotation Tab

The Rotation tab allows one to rotate the tiles depending on the row and column position. Rotation center is used as the center of rotation. See the Tile Tricks section for examples of using a shifted Rotation center. The rotation is specified in degrees. The following options are available:

- **Angle**: Rotate by this amount around the Rotation center. A random factor can also be added.
- **Alternate**: The rotation alternates between being added and subtracted.
- **Cumulate**: Rotation is cumulative.

The Rotation tab of the Tile Clones dialog.
A P1 symmetry tiling with a 10° rotation for each row and column.

A P1 symmetry tiling with a 15° alternating rotation for each row and column.
Blur and Opacity Tab

The *Blur and opacity* tab allows one to change the *blur* and/or *transparency* of each tile depending on the row and column position.

![Blur and opacity tab](image)

The *Blur and opacity* tab of the *Tile Clones* dialog.

**Blur**

A *Gaussian Blur* filter can be applied to each clone with different blurring values.

The blur change is specified in percent. The change in blur can be specified to *Alternate* between a positive and negative value; however, a negative blur value can be entered in the *Per row* and *Per column* boxes. A *Randomizer* factor can also be specified.
A P1 symmetry tiling with a 2% increase in blur for each row and column.

**Opacity**

The opacity change is specified in percent. The change in opacity can be specified to *Alternate* between a positive and negative value. A *Randomizer* factor can also be specified.

A P1 symmetry tiling with a 10% decrease in opacity for each row and column. A red circle has been placed under the tiling to illustrate the changes in opacity.
Color Tab

The Color tab allows one to change the Color of each tile depending on the row and column position. The color change is specified in percent for each of the three components of a color specified with the HSL standard (see the section called HSL). The Hue repeats itself after a change of 100%. The full scale for Saturation and Lightness components are each 100%. The changes in the three parameters can be specified to Alternate between a positive and negative change. A Randomizer factor can also be specified.

Two key points: First, the Fill and/or Stroke paint must be specified as Unset (●) (see the section called Fill and Stroke Paint). Second, an Initial color must be specified by using the Initial color of tiled clones dialog accessible by clicking on the color button next to the Initial Color label.

Note that it is meaningless to have only a shift in Hue with a starting color of black or white. This is like trying to walk east from the North Pole.

The Color tab of the Tile Clones dialog.
A P1 symmetry tiling with a 16.7% change in *Hue* per row and a −16.7% change in *Saturation* per column. The starting color is a red with 100% *Saturation* and 50% *Lightness*.

A P1 symmetry tiling with an 8.3% change in *Lightness* per row and a −8.3% change in *Lightness* per column. The starting color is a red with 100% *Saturation* and 50% *Lightness*. 
The Trace tab allows one to set the color, size, and transparency of the tiles by the color or transparency of the objects (including bitmaps) that are placed under the location of the tiling. To enable this feature, the Trace the drawing under the tiles box must be checked.

The Trace tab has three sections. At the top is a section for specifying what property of the underlying drawing should be used for input. Options include the color, one of the RGB components, or one of the HSL components. There is also the option to use the Opacity, which is the sum of the opacities (Alpha) of all objects under the tile.

In the middle of the tab is a section to modify the input value. One can specify a Gamma\(^1\) correction or add a randomization factor to the input. One can also invert the input.

The bottom section is for specifying what should be affected by the input. Options include Presence (the probability that a given tile will be drawn), color, size, and opacity. The color will only be changed for regions of the base tile that have Unset fill.

The following figures show the effect of some of the possible combinations of input and output options. All the figures use the first rainbow figure as the input drawing. The rainbow is a radial gradient with multiple stops. The inside of the rainbow is defined as a white gradient stop with zero Alpha. The last outside stop is defined with a red color and with zero Alpha. For most figures, a star inside an unfilled rectangle is used as the base tile. The star has been given an Unset fill when color is selected in the output.

\(^{1}\) See appendix for definition of Gamma.
The rainbow pattern used for the background (a radial gradient).


Input: Color. Output: Color. Background rainbow has been removed.


Input: Hue. Output: Size. Note how the red has a hue of zero and purple has the maximum value.

Input: Color, 10% random gamma. Output Color. Changes made to other tabs: Shift: random 10%, Rotation: random 20%. A square base tile with *Unset* fill has been used. The background rainbow has been deleted.

Input: Color, 10% random gamma. Output Color. Changes made to other tabs: Shift: random 10%, Rotation: random 20%. The number of rows and columns has been increased to compensate for the shift. The background rainbow has been deleted.
Tricks

It is possible to exploit the Tiling dialog to produce a number of useful effects. The most interesting is placing tiles along an arc or spiral.

To put a tile along an arc use the P1 symmetry with one row of tiles. Check the Exclude tile box. The Rotation center is used as the center of rotation.

The base tile is drawn on the left, showing the Rotation center of the tile. On the right is after a P1 tiling with a per column shift removed by checking the Exclude tile box and with a rotation of 60%.

The next figure shows how 12 stars can be put in a circle. This would have been an alternative way of placing the stars in the European Union flag if the stars did not need to be placed with one of their points straight up.

This trick can also place objects along a spiral by specifying that the tile should get larger with each column. One can put the stars on a logarithmic spiral so that the stars don’t run into each after several loops.
Stars on a logarithmic spiral. The tile size is increased by 2.5% with Base set to 2.7. Each tile is rotated 20°. The per column shift has been set to 60% (with the Exclude tile box checked).
A “P1 symmetry” tiling, 8 rows, 21 columns. Rotation of $-11.5^\circ$ per row and $20.6^\circ$ per column, Scale of 39.3% per row and 24.2% per column with a Base of 2.7 for both $x$ and $y$. The pattern matches that for a pine cone with 8 rows in one direction and 13 in the other. For the mathematicians: note that 13 times the per column scaling is equal to 8 times the per row scaling and that 13 times the per column rotation minus 8 times the per row rotation is equal to $360^\circ$. This is due to the constraint that the 14th star in the first row is the same as the 9th star in the first column.

A circle tiled on an arc. The red circle with the Rotation center moved off center was the source tile.
Comprehensive Index

Symbols
3D Box, 163
3D Polyhedrons Extension, 387

A
Add Node Extension, 377
AI (Illustrator), 117
Align, 157
Alphabet Soup Extension, 388
Alt Key, 425
Angle definition, 144
Animation, 66, 73, 421
   JavaScript, 85
   SMIL, 70
Arcs, 166
   Objects placed on, 339
Arrange Extension, 354
Attributes, 227
   Fill, 227
      Custom Swatches, 247
      Flat color, 228
      Gradients, 237
      Patterns, 243
   Fill rules, 248
   Stroke paint, 227
   Stroke style, 249
      Cap style, 250
      Complex, 252
      Dash style, 251
      Join style, 250
      Markers, 251
AutoCAD, 117
Auto Palette, 232, 247
Autosave, 111

B
Bank Note, example, 89
Barcode — Datamatrix Extension, 389
Barcode Extension, 388
Batch Export, 116
Bezier (Pen) Tool, 175
Beziers Curve, 172
Bitmap
   Copy, 138
   Bitmaps, 354, 386
Black and White Color Extension, 355
Blend, 293
   Bold (Text), 221
   Borders, 370
   Bottle, 101
   Bounding Box
      Alignment, 157
      Cap style, 251
      Distribution, 158
      Join style, 250
      Markers, 252
      Patterns, 244
      Tiles, 322
      Visual vs. Geometric, 144
   Box (3D Tool), 163
   Brighter Color Extension, 355
   Bucket Tool, 261
   Button, 66
   Buttons, 378
   Calendar Extension, 389
   Calligraphy Tool, 177
   Canvas, 2
      Panning, 130
      Zooming, 130
   Cap style, 250
   Cartesian Grid Extension, 390
   Cascading Style Sheets, 418
   Challenges, 433
      Knot, 433
      Pine cone, 434
      Red spiral, 433
      Spiral Gyral, 435
      Squares, 434
   Change case text extensions, 402
   Charts, 351
   Circles, 166
   Clip art, 114
   Clipping, 265
      Bitmap, 246
   Clones, 18, 138
      Find original, 139
      Tiling, 319
   Color, 228
      CMS (Color Management System), 232
      CMYK (Cyan Magenta Yellow Key), 230
      Dropper Tool, 236
      Extensions, 355
      Gestures, 235
      HSL (Hue Saturation Lightness), 230
      Palette, 3, 232
      Profile, 228
      Randomize, 256, 361
      Replace, 363
Index

RGB (Red Green Blue), 229
RGB Barrel, 363
Style Indicator, 233
Swatches dialog, 232
Tweak Tool, 256
Wheel, 231
Color Calibration, 3
Color Extension, 355
Color Markers to Match Stroke Extension, 377
Color Matrix, 290
Command Bar, 2
Command Line, 428
Complex Strokes, 252, 253
Component Transfer, 292
Composite, 295
Connectors, 351
Creating, 351
Modifying, 352
Routing, 352
Connector Tool, 351
Construct Grid LPE, 199
Convert to Braille Extension, 401
Convert to Dashes Extension, 378
Convolve Matrix, 302
Coordinates, 143
Copy, 137
Bitmap, 138
Drop, 138
Create Tiled Clones dialog, 56
Cropping
Bitmap, 246
CSS, 418
CSS Background, 413
Current style, 161, 220
Custom Color Extension, 356
Customization, 424
Configuration files, 424
Custom keyboard shortcuts, 427
Custom markers, 426
Custom swatches (palettes), 426
Custom templates, 425
Inkscape Preferences dialog, 424
Outline Mode
At Start Up, 132
Colors, 132
SVG Output Format, 425
Custom keyboard shortcuts, 427
Custom Swatches, 247
Custom templates, 425, 437
Cut, 137

D
Darker Color Extension, 356
Dash style, 251
Defs
File format, 440
Vacuuming, 129
Delete, 138
Desaturate Color Extension, 357
Desc (Description), 420
Desktop Cutting Plotter, 117
Convert to Dashes Extension, 378
Dialog
Add Layer, 83
Trace Bitmap, 106
XML Editor, 67, 75
Dials
Align and Distribute, 157
Nodes, 190
Check Spelling, 219
Create Tiled Clones, 56, 319
Docking, 4
Document Metadata, 110
Document Properties
Coordinates, 143
Grid, 7
Page size, 6, 110
Export, 15, 115
Export Bitmap, 115
Fill and Stroke, 227, 228
Filter Editor, 285
Find, 136
Floating, 4
Glyphs, 217
Gradient Editor, 240
Guide line, 154
Hide, 131
Icon Preview, 133
Import, 21, 32, 111
Import From Open Clip Art Library, 114
Inkscape Preferences, 424
Pixel size, 144
Selection cues, 135
Steps and Snap angles, 161
Transforms, 143
Input Devices, 180
Layers, 142
Object Properties, 135
Open (File), 110
Path Effect Editor, 197
Print, 128
Rows and Columns, 159
Save a Copy, 111
Save As, 117
Swatches, 232
Text and Font, 219, 220
Tiling, 319
Index

Trace bitmap, 342
Transform, 148
Undo History, 134
XML Editor, 67, 76, 315
Dimensions Extension, 403
Displacement Map, 306
Distribute
  Non-uniform, 159
  Remove Overlaps, 159
  Rows and Columns, 159
  Uniform, 158
Dockable Dialogs, 4
Draw From Triangle Extension, 390
Draw Handles Extension, 403
Drawing size, 6, 110
Dropper Tool, 102, 236, 240
Drop Shadow, 287
Duplicate, 138
  Window, 132
DXF (AutoCAD), 117
Dynamic Offset, 78

E

ECMAscript, 421
Edge 3D Extension, 378
Edit
  Paste in Place, 83
Edit Menu
    Clone
      Create Clone, 18, 138, 252, 423
      Create Tiled Clones..., 57, 95, 139, 319
      Relink to Copied , 139
      Select Original, 59, 139, 224, 226
      Unlink Clone, 62, 95, 139
    Copy, 137, 139, 197, 203, 227, 240
    Cut, 62, 137, 140, 204
    Delete, 30, 138
    Deselect, 136
    Duplicate, 30, 53, 138, 252, 423
    Find..., 135, 136
    Guides Around Page, 154
    Invert Selection, 136
    Make a Bitmap Copy, 65, 138
    Paste, 137
    Paste in Place, 62, 137, 140
    Paste Size, 151
      Paste Height, 151
      Paste Height Separately, 151
      Paste Size, 151
      Paste Size Separately, 151
      Paste Width, 151
      Paste Width Separately, 151
    Paste Style, 138, 227, 240, 308
    Redo, 134
    Select All, 116, 136, 226
    Select All in All Layers, 136
    Undo, 10, 134
    Undo History..., 134
    XML Editor..., 67, 75, 151, 315, 414, 416
Effects (Extensions), 353
Ellipse (Circle, Arc) Tool, 36, 44, 166
Ellipses, 44, 166
  Tool Controls, 167
Embed All Images Extension, 374
Embed Tag, 411
EMF (Enhanced Meta File), 118
Engraving, 182
Envelope Deformation LPE, 199
Envelope Extension, 378
EPS (Encapsulated PostScript), 119
Equations, 124
Eraser Tool, 259
  Cut-Out Mode, 259
  Touch Mode, 259
Examples
  Animation, 66, 73
  Bank Note, 89
  Button, 66
  Complex Strokes, 253
  European Union Flag, 16
  Isometric Projection, 38
  Logo, 19
  Parallel lines, 184
  Scissors on path, 251
  Soup Can, 43
  Swedish Flag, 5
  Tile Pattern, 56
  Tracing, 31
Export
  Command Line, 429
  Non-PNG Files, 117
  PNG, 15, 115
Export dialog, 115
Extension
  Arrange, 354
Extensions, 353
  3D Polyhedrons, 387
  Add Nodes, 377
  Alphabet Soup, 388
  Barcode, 388
  Barcode — Datamatrix, 389
  Calendar, 389
  Cartesian Grid, 390
  Change Case, 402
  Color, 355
    Black and White, 355
    Brighter, 355
Custom, 356
Darker, 356
Desaturate, 357
Grayscale, 357
Less Hue, 358
Less Light, 358
Less Saturation, 359
More Hue, 359
More Light, 360
More Saturation, 360
Negative, 361
Randomize, 361
Remove Blue, 362
Remove Green, 362
Remove Red, 363
Replace color, 363
RGB Barrel, 363
Color Markers to Match Stroke, 377
Convert to Braille, 401
Convert to Dashes, 378
Dimensions, 403
Draw From Triangle, 390
Draw Handles, 403
Edge 3D, 378
Embed All Images, 374
Envelope, 378
Extract One Image, 374
Extrude, 364
Flatten Bezier, 379
Flip Case, 402
Foldable Box, 390
Fractal
Lindenmayer, 394
Fractalize, 379
Function Plotting, 391
Gear, 392
Grid, 393
Guides Creator, 393
Inset/Outset Halo, 364
Interpolate, 365
Interpolate Attribute in a Group, 380
JavaScript, 405
JessyInk, 374
Jitter Nodes, 381
LaTeX Formula, 393
Lorem Ipsum, 401
Lower Case, 402
L-system, 394
Measure Path, 403
Motion, 366
Number Nodes, 404
Parametric Curves, 394
Pattern Along Path, 367
Perspective, 381
Pixelsnap, 383
Polar Grid, 397
Printing Marks, 397
Random Case, 402
Random Tree, 398
Raster, 386
Replace Text, 401
Rubber Stretch, 383
Scatter, 372
Sentence Case, 402
Set Attributes, 405
Slicer, 407
Spirograph, 398
Split Text, 402
Straighten Segments, 384
Text, 401
Title Case, 402
Transmit Attributes, 406
Triangle, 400
Upper Case, 402
Voronoi, 373
Web, 405
Whirl, 384
Wireframe Sphere, 400
Extensions Menu
Generate from Path
Pattern along Path, 54, 367
Modify Path
Add Nodes..., 53, 377
Previous Extension, 353
Previous Extension Settings..., 353
Extract One Image Extension, 374
Extrude Extension, 364

F
File format, 437
File Menu
Document Metadata..., 110
Document Properties..., 6, 143
Export Bitmap..., 15, 115
Import..., 21, 32, 40, 111
Import From Open Clip Art Library, 114
Inkscape Preferences..., 1, 57, 135, 144, 146, 151, 161,
173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 183, 185, 194, 228, 238, 242,
424
Input Devices..., 180
New, 110
Open..., 110
Open Recent, 110
Print..., 128
Revert, 110, 134
Save, 110
Save a Copy..., 111
Index

Save As, 15
Save As..., 110, 117
Vacuum Defs, 129, 198, 247, 422, 429
Files, 110
Custom templates, 425
Export, 15, 114
Import, 111
New, 110
Open, 110
Printing, 128
Revert, 110
Save, 110
Save a Copy, 111
Save As, 110, 117
Vacuuming Defs, 129
Fill, 227
Hatchings, 246
Spirals, 170
Filter Effects, 267, 285
Blend, 293
Color Matrix, 290
Component Transfer, 292
Composite, 295
Convolve Matrix, 302
Custom, 285
Displacement Map, 306
Example, 287
Flood, 296
Gaussian Blur, 308
Image, 296
Merge, 296
Morphology, 310
Offset, 310
Tile, 297
Tile Clones Blurring, 309
Turbulence, 297
Filters Menu
Filter Editor..., 285
Remove Filters, 285
Find dialog, 136
Flags
European Union, 16
Swedish, 5
Flatten Bezier Extension, 379
Flip case text extension, 402
Floating Dialogs, 4
Flood, 296
Flourish, 371
Foldable Box Extension, 390
Font
Family, 220
Size, 221
Style, 221
Fractal (Lindenmayer) Extension, 394
Fractalize Extension, 379
Fractals
Lindenmayer Extension, 394
VonKoch LPE, 212
Freehand Tool, 173
Full Screen, 132
Function Plotting Extension, 391
FX (JavaFX), 119

G
Gaussian Blur, 308
Gear Extension, 392
Gears, 199, 392
Gestures
Color, 235
Stroke, 249
Gimp
Filtering, 342
Glyphs Dialog, 217
GPL (Gimp Palette), 120
Gradients, 45, 237
Blurring, 309
Editor dialog, 240
Reverse, 243
Gradient Tool, 46, 102, 237, 242
Grayscale Color Extension, 357
Grid Extension, 393
Grids, 7, 155
Groups, 140
Index

Editing, 140
Guides, 16, 154
  From Objects, 155
Guides Creator Extension, 393

H
Handles
  Drawing, 403
Hatches (Rough) LPE, 200
Hatchings, 182, 210, 246, 255
Help, xviii
Help Menu
  About Inkscape, 429
  Keys and Mouse, xviii
  Tutorials, 134
  Calligraphy, 178
Hidden Object, 135
HPGL (Hewlett-Packard Graphics Language), 120

I
Icon Preview, 133
Icons in Menus, 2
Iframe Tag, 411
Illustrator, 117, 453
Image, 296
Img Tag, 412
Import, 31, 111
Import dialog, 21, 32, 111
Inkscape Preferences dialog, 424
Inkview, 436
Inline SVG, 412
Input Device, 180
Inset/Outset Halo Extension, 364
Interpolate Attribute in a Group Extension, 380
Interpolate Extension, 365
Interpolate Sub-Paths LPE, 201
Isometric Projection, 38, 165
Italic (Text), 221

J
JavaScript, 405, 419, 421
  Set Attributes Extension, 405
  Transmit Attributes Extension, 406
JessyInk
  Extensions, 374
JessyInk Extension, 374
Jitter Nodes Extension, 381
Join style, 250
Justification, 221

K
Kerning, 222, 223
Keyboard shortcuts
  Custom, 427
  Keys and Mouse, xviii
  Knot LPE, 202
  Koch's Snowflake, 394

L
LaTeX, 121, 123, 124
  Formula Extension, 393
LaTeX Formula Extension, 393
Layer Menu
  Add Layer..., 35, 83, 142
  Delete Current Layer, 142
  Duplicate Current Layer, 142
  Layers..., 141, 142
  Layer to Bottom, 142
  Layer to Top, 142
  Lower Layer, 142
  Move Selection to Layer Above, 142
  Move Selection to Layer Below, 35, 142
  Raise Layer, 142
  Rename Layer..., 142
  Switch to Layer Above, 142
  Switch to Layer Below, 142
Layers, 140
Less Hue Color Extension, 358
Less Light Color Extension, 358
Less Saturation Color Extension, 359
Letter Spacing, 222
Lindenmayer Extension, 394
Lined Offset, 78
Line Spacing, 222
Line Width, 173, 233, 249
Linking (Web), 416
Live Path Effects, 197
  Bend, 198
  Construct Grid, 199
  Envelope Deformation, 199
  Gears, 199
  Hatches (Rough), 200
  Interpolate Sub-Paths, 201
  Knot, 202
  Pattern Along Path, 203
  Ruler, 206
  Sketch, 206
  Spiro Spline, 208
  Stitch Sub-Paths, 209
  VonKoch, 212
Locked Objects, 135
Logo example, 19
Lorem ipsum Extension, 401
Lower case text extension, 402
LPE, 197
L-system Extension, 394
Index

**M**
- Markers, 251
  - Color to Match Stroke, 377
  - Custom, 251, 317, 426
- Masking, 265
- Math Equations, 124
- Measure Path Extension, 403
- Menu Bar, 2
- Menu Icons, 2
- Merge, 296
- Money, 89
- More Hue Color Extension, 359
- More Light Color Extension, 360
- More Saturation Color Extension, 360
- Morphology, 310
- Motion Extension, 366

**N**
- Negative Color Extension, 361
- Neon Sign, 73
- Nodes, 185
  - Add Node Extension, 377
  - Alignment, 190
  - Auto-Smooth, 190
  - Corner (Cusp), 173
  - Editing
    - Keyboard, 187
    - Mouse, 186
  - Inserting, 186, 188
  - Sculpting, 191
  - Selecting, 185
  - Smooth, 173
  - Tool Controls, 188
- Node Tool, 23, 44, 185, 197
- No Filters Mode, 132
- Notification Region, 3, 10
  - Objects selected, 135
- Nudge factor, 146, 185
- Number Nodes Extension, 404

**O**
- Object Menu
  - Align and Distribute..., 40, 52, 157, 190
  - Clip
    - Release, 266
    - Set, 60, 266
  - Fill and Stroke..., 14, 16, 35, 39, 45, 190, 227, 228, 229, 233, 234, 237, 243, 247, 249, 251
  - Flip Horizontal, 54, 148, 169, 225
  - Flip Vertical, 148, 169
  - Group, 40, 57, 140, 367
  - Lower, 37, 139
  - Lower to Bottom, 49, 139
  - Mask
    - Release, 266
    - Set, 266
  - Object Properties..., 135, 419
  - Object to Guides, 155
  - Pattern
    - Objects to Pattern, 61, 92, 244
    - Pattern to Objects, 244
  - Raise, 139
  - Raise to Top, 54, 59, 139
  - Rotate 90° CCW, 148
  - Rotate 90° CW, 148
  - Rows and Columns..., 159
  - Transform..., 19, 34, 40, 148
  - Ungroup, 22, 53, 140, 367
  - Unhide All, 135
  - Unlock All, 135
- Object Properties
  - Desc, 419
  - Hidden, 135
  - JavaScript (ECMAScript), 419
  - Locked, 135
  - Title, 419
- Object Properties Dialog, 419
- Objects
  - Hidden, 135
  - Locked, 135
  - Tweak Tool, 254
- Object Tag, 410
- Object to Path, 183
- Oblique (Text), 221
- ODG (Open Document Graphic), 120
- Offset, 310
- Opacity, 234
- Open Clip Art Library, 114
- Orientation (Text), 223
- Outline Mode, 132
- Colors, 132, 425

**P**
- Page, 2
- Page size, 6, 110
- Paint Bucket Tool, 261
- Palette, 3, 232
- Panning, 130
- Parallel lines, 184
- Parametric Curves Extension, 394
- Paste, 137
  - In Place, 137
  - Style, 138
- Paste Size, 151
- Path
  - Dynamic Offset, 78
Linked Offset, 78

Path Menu
  Break Apart, 35, 194, 256, 367
  Combine, 22, 27, 37, 45, 49, 194, 209, 367
  Cut Path, 54, 196, 453
  Difference, 28, 195
  Division, 196, 453
  Dynamic Offset, 78, 193
  Exclusion, 195
  Inset, 193
  Intersection, 30, 51, 195
  Linked Offset, 78, 193
  Object to Path, 22, 53, 172, 183, 193, 198, 203, 212, 214, 252, 371
  Outset, 193
  Paste Path Effect, 198
  Path Effect Editor..., 197
  Remove Path Effect, 198
  Reverse, 194, 209, 224, 379, 381
  Simplify, 174, 194, 342, 423, 454
  Stroke to Path, 183, 256
  Trace Bitmap..., 32, 106, 342
  Union, 13, 194, 264, 372

Paths, 172
  Bezier, 172
  Break apart, 194
  Combine, 194
  Creating, 173
  Editing, 185
  File format, 439
  Flatten Bezier Extension, 379
  Fractalize Extension, 379
  From other objects, 183
  Knot, 433

Live Path Effects, 197
  Bend, 198
  Construct Grid, 199
  Envelope Deformation, 199
  Gears, 199
  Hatches (Rough), 200
  Interpolate Sub-Paths, 201
  Knot, 202
  Pattern Along Path, 203
  Ruler, 206
  Sketch, 206
  Spiro Spline, 208
  Stitch Sub-Paths, 209
  VonKoch, 212

Merging, 12

Object to Path, 172

Offsets, 193

Operations, 194
  Cut Path, 196
  Difference, 28, 195

Division, 196
  Exclusion, 195
  Intersection, 30, 195
  Union, 194
  Reverse, 194
  Simplify, 194
  Tweak Tool, 255

Path Style, 173

Patterns, 243

PDF (Portable Document Format), 120
Pencil Tool, 173
Pen Tool, 175
Perspective, 187, 379, 382
Perspective Extension, 381
Photorealism, 101
Pine cone, 434
Pixelsnap Extension, 383
Plotter, 391
PLT (HPGL), 122
PNG, 122
Polar Grid Extension, 397
Polygons, 167
Polyhedrons Extension, 387
Positioning, 144
POV (PovRay), 122
PovRay, 122
Presentations, 374
Printing, 128
Printing Marks Extension, 397
PS (PostScript), 123

Q
  Quadrilateral Distortion Extension, 378

R
  Random case text extension, 402
  Randomize Color Extension, 361
  Randomizer Extension, 381
  Random Tree Extension, 398
  Raster Extensions, 386
  Raster Graphics, xv
  Rectangles, 10, 161
    Tool Controls, 162
  Rectangle Tool, 10, 161
  Redo, 134
  Remove Blue Color Extension, 362
  Remove Green Color Extension, 362
  Remove Overlaps, 159
  Remove Red Color Extension, 363
  Replace Color Extension, 363
Index

Replace Text Extension, 401
Reverse Gradient, 243
Reverse Path, 194
Revert, 110, 134
RGB Barrel Color Extension, 363
Rotation Center, 146
Rotation Snap Angle, 161
Rows and Columns, 159
Rubber Stretch Extension, 383
Ruler LPE, 206
Rules, 3, 143

S
Scatter, 372
Scripts, 353
Scroll Bars, 3
Security Markings, 89
Selection, 134
   Multiple objects, 135
   Tool, 134
   With Find dialog, 136
   With keyboard, 136
   With mouse, 135
Select Tool, 12, 134
Sentence case text extension, 402
Set Attributes Extension, 405
Shadows, 48, 365
Shapes, 161
SIOX (Simple Interactive Object Extraction), 350
Size (Page/Drawing), 6, 110
SK1, 124
Sketch LPE, 206
Slicer Extension, 407
Slices, 116
SMIL Animation, 70
Snap Angles, 161
Snap Bar, 2
Snapping, 152
   Guides, 154
Soup Can, 43
Spheres, 441
Spiral Gyral, 435
Spirals, 169
   Objects placed on, 339
   Tool Controls, 170
   With gradient, 433
Spiral Tool, 94, 169
Spirograph Extension, 398
Spiro Spline LPE, 208
Split Text Extension, 402
Spray Tool, 257
Squares, 161
Star (Polygon) Tool, 17, 167
Stars, 17, 167
   Tool Controls, 169
Star Tool, 96
Status Bar, 3
Steps, 161
Stitch Sub-Paths, 209
Straighten Segment Extension, 384
Stroke
   Width, 173
Stroke Gestures, 249
Stroke paint, 227
Strokes
   Complex, 253
Stroke style, 249
Stroke to Path, 183
Stroke Width, 233, 249
Style Indicator, 3, 233
Style Sheets, 418
Subscript, 222
Superscript, 222
SVG
   File format, 437
   Output Format, 425
Symmetries, 320

T
Tablet Input, 180
Templates
   Custom, 425
   Default, 110, 437
Tessellation, 319
TeX, 121, 123, 124
Text, 216
   Baseline, 217
   Change Case, 402
   Create, 20
   Creating, 216
   Editing, 219
Flowed Text object, 218
Font Family, 220
Font Size, 221
Font Style, 221
In a shape, 225
Justification, 221
Kerning, 222, 223
Letter Spacing, 222
Line Spacing, 222
Linked flowed text, 225
On path, 224, 371
Orientation, 223
Regular Text object, 217
Rotating
   Individual characters, 223
Index

Rotating Characters, 223
Selecting, 218
Shifting Characters, 223
Spell Checking, 219
Style, 220
Superscripts and Subscripts, 222
Text to path, 22, 217
Underlined, 317
Unicode, 216
Word Spacing, 222
Text and Font Dialog, 220
Text Extensions, 401
Text Menu
  Check Spelling..., 219
  Convert to Text, 226
  Flow into Frame, 226
  Glyphs..., 217
  Put on Path, 53, 224
  Remove from Path, 224
  Remove Manual Kerns, 113, 223
  Text and Font..., 52, 219, 220
  Unflow, 226
Text Tool, 20, 216, 220
Tile, 297
Tile Pattern, 56
Tiling, 319
  Base tile, 322
  Blur, 331
  Blurring, 309
  Color, 333
  Opacity, 332
  Rotating, 329
  Scaling, 327
  Shifting, 323
  Symmetries, 320
  Tracing, 335
  Tricks, 339
Tiling dialog, 56, 319
Title, 420
Title case text extension, 402
Tool Box, 3
Tool Controls, 3
  Box, 164
  Ellipse, 167
  Node, 188
  Rectangle, 162
  Spiral, 170
  Star, 169
Tools
  Bezier, 175
  Box, 163
  Calligraphy, 177
    Hatchings, 182
    Tablet, 180
  Dropper, 236
  Ellipse, 166
  Eraser, 259
  Freehand, 173
  Gradient, 242
  Node, 185
  Paint Bucket, 261
  Pen, 175
  Pencil, 173
  Rectangle, 161
  Selection, 134
  Spiral, 169
  Spray, 257
  Star, 17, 167
  Tweak, 254
  Zoom, 131
Tool tips, 10
Trace Bitmap, 106
Trace bitmap dialog, 342
Tracing, 101
  Bitmaps, 342
  SIOX, 350
  Tiles, 335
  Tracing example, 31
Transformations, 144
Transforming, Rectangles, 143
Transmit Attributes Extension, 406
Triangle Extension, 400
Turbulence, 297
Tweak Tool, 254
  Colors, 256
  Objects, 254
  Paths, 255
U
Undo, 134
Unicode Mode, 216
Upper case text extension, 402
V
Vacuuming Defs, 129
Vector Graphics, xv
viewBox Attribute, 414
View Menu
  Color-managed View, 228
Display Mode
    No Filters, 132
    Normal, 132
    Outline, 132, 423
    Toggle, 132
  Duplicate Window, 132
  Full Screen, 132
  Grid, 7, 156
Index

Guide, 17, 154
Icon Preview, 133
Next Window, 132
Previous Window, 132
Show/Hide, 1, 131, 232
Show/Hide Dialogs, 131
Snap, 154
Swatches..., 232
Zoom, 131
   Selection, 384
Viewport, 414
VonKoch LPE, 212
Voronoi Extension, 373

W
Wacom Tablet, 180
Web, 409
   Animation, 421
   CSS Background, 413
   Embed Tag, 411
   Extensions, 405
   Iframe Tag, 411
   Img Tag, 412
   Inline SVG, 412
   JavaScript, 419
   Linking, 416
   Object Tag, 410
   Older Browsers, 413
   Positioning SVG, 414
   Slicer Extension, 407
   Style Sheets, 418
Web Extension, 405
Web Presentations, 374
Whirl Extension, 384
Window
   Duplicate, 132
   Main, 1
Wire Frame, 132
Wireframe Sphere Extension, 400
WMF (Windows Meta File), 114
WMF (Windows Metafiles), 126
Word Spacing, 222

X
XAML (Application eXtensible Markup Language), 114, 127
XCF (Gimp), 127
XML Editor, 315
   Examples, 317
      Color markers, 317
      Underlined text, 317

Z
Zooming, 130
Zoom Tool, 131
Z-order, 139
Index by Menu

Symbols

D
Dialog
  Trace Bitmap, 106

E
Edit
  Paste in Place, 83
Edit Menu
  Clone
    Create Clone, 18, 138, 252, 423
    Create Tiled Clones..., 57, 95, 139, 319
    Relink to Copied, 139
    Select Original, 59, 139, 224, 226
    Unlink Clone, 62, 95, 139
  Copy, 137, 139, 197, 203, 227, 240
  Cut, 62, 137, 140, 204
  Delete, 30, 138
  Deselect, 136
  Duplicate, 30, 53, 138, 252, 423
  Find..., 135, 136
  Guides Around Page, 154
  Invert Selection, 136
  Make a Bitmap Copy, 65, 138
  Paste, 137
  Paste in Place, 62, 137, 140
  Paste Size, 151
    Paste Height, 151
    Paste Height Separately, 151
    Paste Size, 151
    Paste Size Separately, 151
    Paste Width, 151
    Paste Width Separately, 151
  Paste Style, 138, 227, 240, 308
  Redo, 134
  Select All, 116, 136, 226
  Select All in All Layers, 136
  Undo, 10, 134
  Undo History..., 134
  XML Editor..., 67, 75, 151, 315, 414, 416
Extensions Menu
  Generate from Path
    Pattern along Path, 54, 367
  Modify Path
    Add Nodes..., 53, 377
    Previous Extension, 353
    Previous Extension Settings..., 353

F
File Menu
  Document Metadata..., 110
  Document Properties..., 6, 143
  Export Bitmap..., 15, 115
  Import..., 21, 32, 40, 111
  Import From Open Clip Art Library, 114
  Inkscape Preferences..., 1, 57, 135, 144, 146, 151, 161, 173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 183, 185, 194, 228, 238, 242, 424
  Input Devices..., 180
  New, 110
  Open..., 110
  Open Recent, 110
  Print..., 128
  Revert, 110, 134
  Save, 110
  Save a Copy..., 111
  Save As, 15
  Save As..., 110, 117
  Vacuum Defs, 129, 198, 247, 422, 429
Filters Menu
  Filter Editor..., 285
  Remove Filters, 285

H
Help Menu
  About Inkscape, 429
  Keys and Mouse, xviii
  Tutorials, 134
    Calligraphy, 178

L
Layer Menu
  Add Layer..., 35, 83, 142
  Delete Current Layer, 142
  Duplicate Current Layer, 142
  Layers..., 141, 142
  Layer to Bottom, 142
  Layer to Top, 142
  Lower Layer, 142
  Move Selection to Layer Above, 142
  Move Selection to Layer Below, 35, 142
  Raise Layer, 142
  Rename Layer..., 142
  Switch to Layer Above, 142
  Switch to Layer Below, 142

O
Object Menu
  Align and Distribute..., 40, 52, 157, 190
  Clip
    Release, 266
Set, 60, 266
Fill and Stroke..., 14, 16, 35, 39, 45, 190, 227, 228, 229, 233, 234, 237, 243, 247, 249, 251
Flip Horizontal, 54, 148, 169
Flip Vertical, 148, 169
Group, 40, 57, 140, 367
Lower, 37, 139
Lower to Bottom, 49, 139
Mask
   Release, 266
   Set, 266
Object Properties..., 135, 419
Object to Guides, 155
Pattern
   Objects to Pattern, 61, 92, 244
   Pattern to Objects, 244
Raise, 139
Raise to Top, 54, 59, 139
Rotate 90° CCW, 148
Rotate 90° CW, 148
Rows and Columns..., 159
Transform..., 19, 34, 40, 148
Ungroup, 22, 53, 140, 367
Unhide All, 135
Unlock All, 135

P
Path Menu
   Break Apart, 35, 194, 256, 367
   Combine, 22, 27, 37, 45, 49, 194, 209, 367
   Cut Path, 54, 196, 453
   Difference, 28, 195
   Division, 196, 453
   Dynamic Offset, 78, 193
   Exclusion, 195
   Inset, 193
   Intersection, 30, 51, 195
   Linked Offset, 78, 193
   Object to Path, 22, 53, 172, 183, 193, 198, 203, 212, 214, 252, 371
   Outset, 193
   Paste Path Effect, 198
   Path Effect Editor..., 197
   Remove Path Effect, 198
   Reverse, 194, 209, 224, 379, 381
   Simplify, 174, 194, 342, 423, 423, 454
   Stroke to Path, 183, 256
   Trace Bitmap..., 32, 106, 342
   Union, 13, 194, 264, 372

Convert to Text, 226
Flow into Frame, 226
Glyphs..., 217
Put on Path, 53, 224
Remove from Path, 224
Remove Manual Kerns, 113, 223
Text and Font..., 52, 219, 220
Unflow, 226

V
View Menu
   Color-managed View, 228
   Display Mode
      No Filters, 132
      Normal, 132
      Outline, 132, 423
      Toggle, 132
   Duplicate Window, 132
   Full Screen, 132
   Grid, 7, 156
   Guide, 17, 154
   Icon Preview, 133
   Next Window, 132
   Previous Window, 132
   Show/Hide, 1, 131, 232
   Show/Hide Dialogs, 131
   Snap, 154
   Swatches..., 232
   Zoom, 131
      Selection, 384

T
Text Menu
   Check Spelling..., 219

472
Index by Tool

Symbols

B
Bezler (Pen) Tool, 175
Box (3D) Tool, 163
Bucket Tool, 261

C
Calligraphy Tool, 177
Connector Tool, 351

D
Dropper Tool, 102, 236, 240

E
Ellipse (Circle, Arc) Tool, 36, 44, 166
Eraser Tool, 259

G
Gradient Tool, 46, 102, 237

N
Node Tool, 23, 44, 185, 197

P
Pencil (Freehand) Tool, 173

R
Rectangle Tool, 10, 161

S
Select Tool, 12, 134
Spiral Tool, 94, 169
Spray Tool, 257
Star (Polygon) Tool, 17, 167
Star Tool, 96

T
Text Tool, 20, 216, 220
Tweak Tool, 254

Z
Zoom Tool, 131