

Bug 1017053 - [UX] Enable search in in-content preferences

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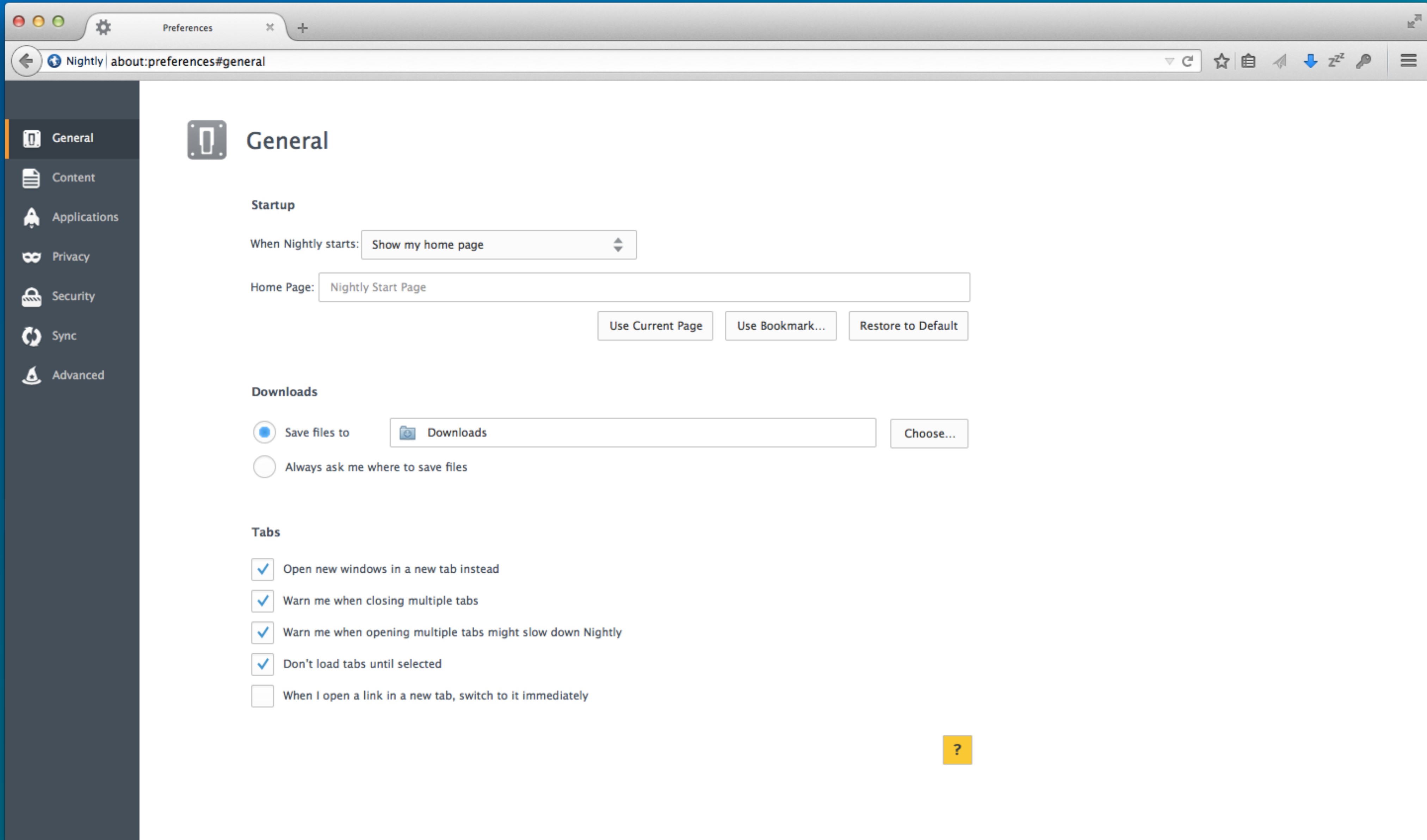
Why do we need search?

Firefox has a lot of preferences and settings which users can alter to create a browser that's just right for them.

However, these settings span across several separate pages (and even more sub-sections) which makes finding a specific setting a user needs akin to finding Waldo, if they don't already know where it is.

As such, we would like to give users the ability to search/filter through Firefox's preferences so that they can make the changes they need quickly and more efficiently.





The image shows a screenshot of the Mozilla Nightly browser's Preferences window, specifically the General tab. The browser's address bar shows "about:preferences#general". On the left, a sidebar lists various preference categories: General, Content, Applications, Privacy, Security, Sync, and Advanced. The main content area is titled "General" and is divided into several sections:

- Startup:** Includes a dropdown menu for "When Nightly starts" set to "Show my home page" and a text input field for "Home Page" containing "Nightly Start Page". Below these are three buttons: "Use Current Page", "Use Bookmark...", and "Restore to Default".
- Downloads:** Features a radio button selected for "Save files to" with a file path input field set to "Downloads" and a "Choose..." button. An unselected radio button is for "Always ask me where to save files".
- Tabs:** A list of five checkboxes:
 - Open new windows in a new tab instead
 - Warn me when closing multiple tabs
 - Warn me when opening multiple tabs might slow down Nightly
 - Don't load tabs until selected
 - When I open a link in a new tab, switch to it immediately

A small yellow question mark icon is located at the bottom right of the page.

The screenshot shows the Firefox Preferences window with the 'General' tab selected. The browser's address bar shows 'about:preferences'. A search box labeled 'Search Preferences' is located in the top right corner of the preferences page. The 'General' section includes settings for 'Startup', 'Downloads', and 'Tabs'. The 'Startup' section has a dropdown for 'When Nightly starts' set to 'Show my home page' and a text input for 'Home Page' set to 'Nightly Start Page'. The 'Downloads' section has a radio button selected for 'Save files to' with a folder path of 'Downloads' and a 'Choose...' button. The 'Tabs' section has five checkboxes, four of which are checked.

Firefox Preferences | Search Preferences

General

Startup

When Nightly starts: Show my home page

Home Page: Nightly Start Page

Use Current Page | Use Bookmark... | Restore to Default

Downloads

Save files to Downloads | Choose...

Always ask me where to save files

Tabs

- Open new windows in a new tab instead
- Warn me when closing multiple tabs
- Warn me when opening multiple tabs might slow down Nightly
- Don't load tabs until selected
- When I open a link in a new tab, switch to it immediately

?

Surfacing Results

Problem: In-content preferences are currently split across 7 different pages which makes surfacing results difficult.

Solutions: There are a few solutions to solve this problem, not all elegant:

- Have the user submit their query, then refresh the page with the results all on one page.
 - Downside: Not easy for user to get back to all prefs; takes longer to find what user wants as user has to submit a query.
- Highlight relevant sections as the user types a query, and provide a list of options hanging off of the search box, much like the System Preferences window in Mac OSX.
 - Downside: User has to select a preference to be taken there, rather than having the preference brought to them.
- Combine all the preferences onto one page, and live-filter the results.

Recommended Direction: Combined Preferences

Recommendation: Combine all the preferences onto one page, and live-filter the results.

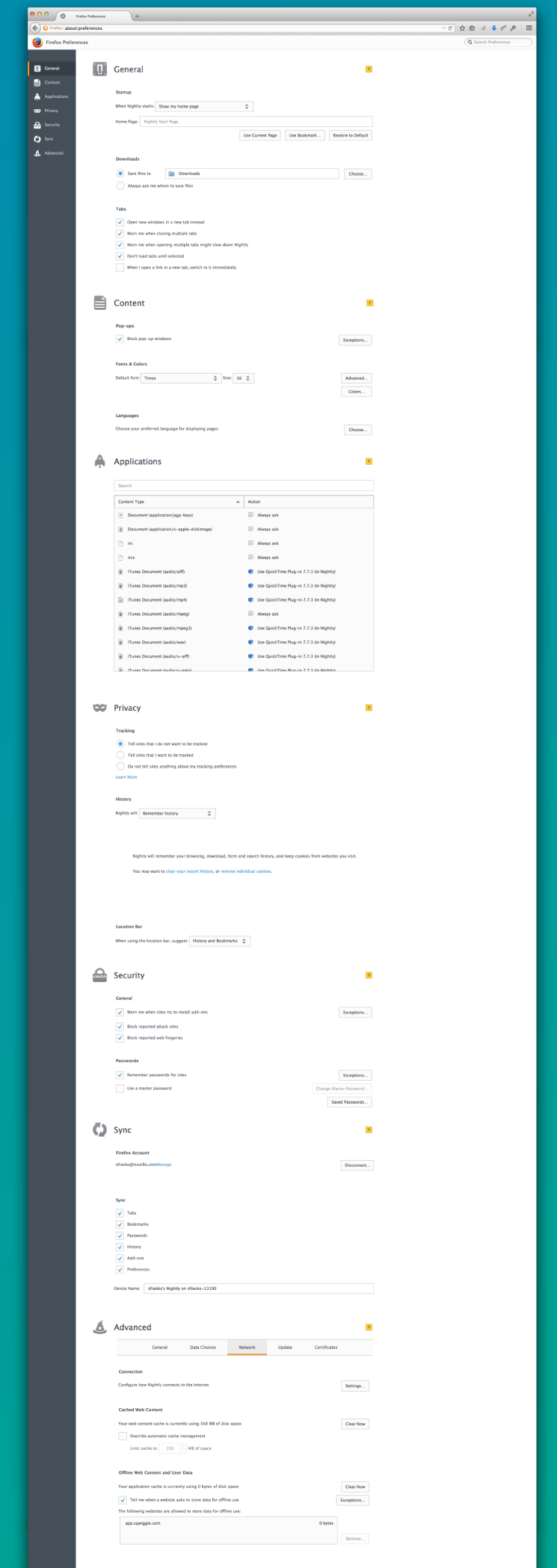
This allows users to quickly find relevant preferences and have them instantly displayed on the screen without having to submit their query.

Users can quickly make changes to their search string and see the results right away.

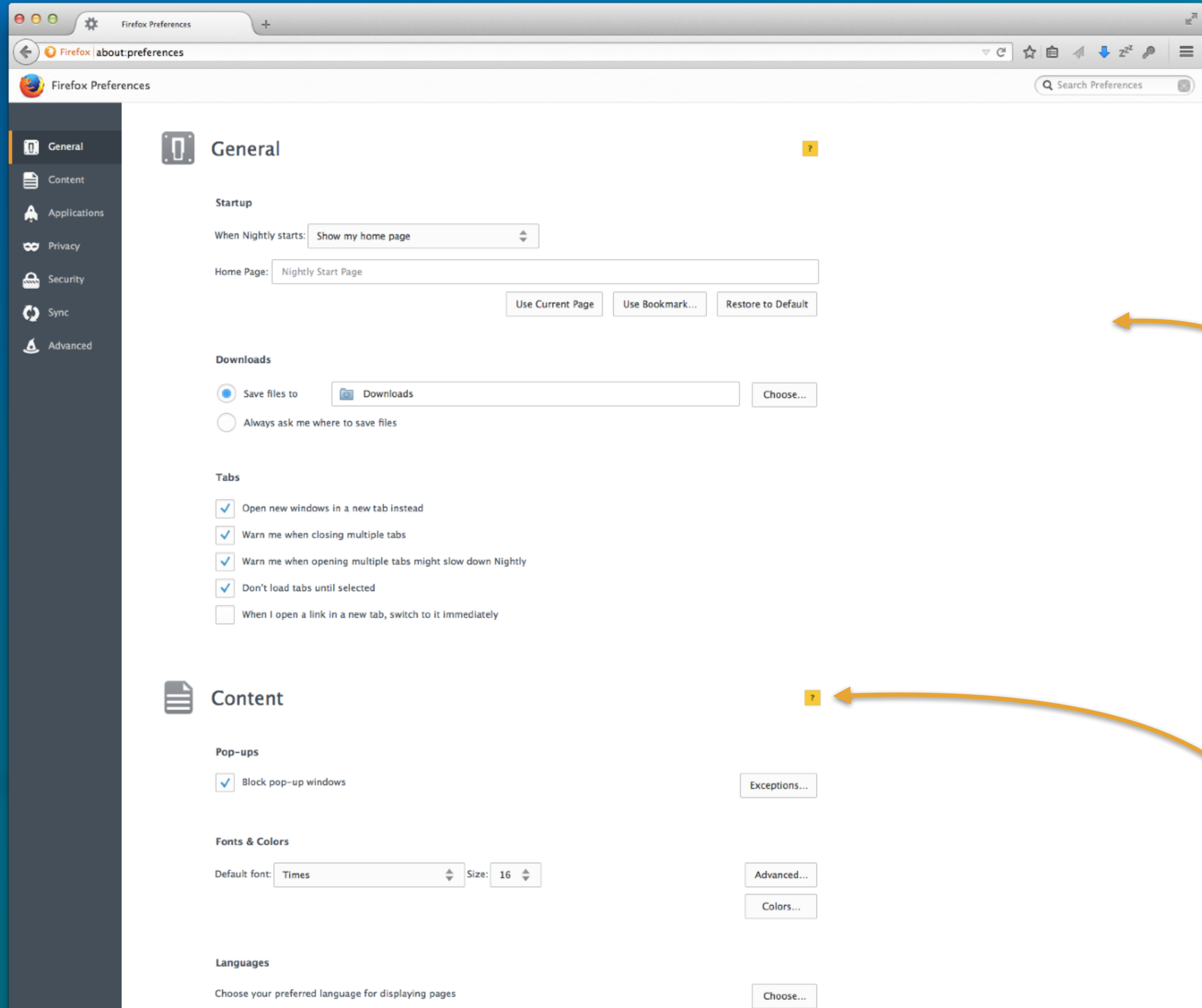
An X in the search box allows the user to quickly clear the query and bring back all the options.

Left-side navigation can remain, but instead of taking users to separate pages, it auto-scrolls to the related section using HTML anchors.

And ultimately, even without search, the preferences will be easier to scan and find preferences when it is all on one page.



Changes



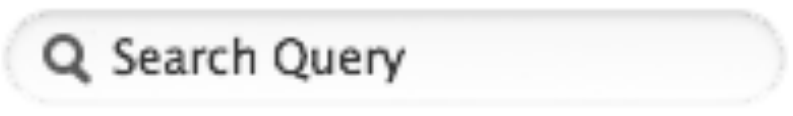
Preferences header

Static column

Search box

Scrollable column

Help icons made smaller and moved up next to section title



This show's how a **search query** is highlighted.

This shows how a **Search Query** in a Button is highlighted.

This shows how a query buried within a **Button's Options** are highlighted

Sometimes a **Search Query** highlight and tooltip can be combined if there are sub-options.

A **Search Query** can also be highlighted in a drop-down menu.

And like a button, if there is an option buried in the **Drop-down** the tool tip will indicate this to the user.

As user types, highlighted matching results are displayed instantly.

The screenshot shows the Firefox Preferences window with the 'Privacy' section selected. A search bar in the top right corner contains the text 'history'. The search results are displayed as yellow callout boxes over the page content. The first callout is over the 'History' sub-section header. The second callout is over the 'Remember history' option in the 'Nightly will:' dropdown menu. The third callout is over the 'History' text in the explanatory paragraph: 'Nightly will remember your browsing, download, form and search history, and keep cookies from websites you visit.' The fourth callout is over the 'History' text in the second paragraph: 'You may want to clear your recent history, or remove individual cookies.' The fifth callout is over the 'History' text in the 'Location Bar' section's dropdown menu: 'When using the location bar, suggest: History and Bookmarks'. The 'Advanced' section is partially visible at the bottom.

Firefox Preferences

Firefox | about:preferences

Firefox Preferences

Search history

Privacy

History

Nightly will: Remember history

Nightly will remember your browsing, download, form and search history, and keep cookies from websites you visit.

You may want to clear your recent history, or remove individual cookies.

Location Bar

When using the location bar, suggest: History and Bookmarks



Questions? Comments? Suggestions?

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