

Fractalius 2.40

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Fractalius 2 is a plug-in for various photo-editors, like *Photoshop* and *PaintShop Pro*, available from RedfieldPlug-ins.com. Incidentally, this site has a number of very interesting items available, many of which are freeware. After downloading and installing *Fractalius* is available from your program's Filter menu. In *Photoshop* I open an image, choose **Filter > Redfiled > Fractalius 2** and begin playing with the sliders.

The first images I saw with this filter applied were amazing. After using the plug-in for awhile, I'm really impressed. This is an incredibly versatile addition to any Filter menu in your choice of photo-editing software.

Its interface is simple, and opens with a preview of the active image in a large window on the left and a Navigator preview window. If you're zoomed in, a box shows in this Navigator what part of the image is visible in the larger window. Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be a way to enlarge the *Fractalius* window.

Directly below are multiple sliders, six with two sliders each. One, labeled MIX, determines how strongly the filter will be applied and how much of the original image shows through. There's a row of icons: Back/Forward,



Random Generator, a Reset button and a Preview checkbox. It's good to leave that last one checked.

At the very bottom is a drop-down list containing **Presets**. These are saved settings that create a specific look. *Fractalius 2* opens with 25 of them, from *Watercolor* to *Sparks*. If you've adjusted the sliders and have the perfect look for your purposes, SAVE USER PRESET is at the bottom of the list. Use it to name and save all those settings. Next to the Presets dropdown are triangles to move your image up or down through the presets, a checkmark to approve the result and an X to cancel the operation.

The effects from this plug-in can be breathtaking. Some tips:

It does take a while to complete the effect. The "progress bar" flashes on and off multiple times before it's done.

Work on a copy of the image: the original is replaced with the filtered result. If you're going to resize the image, do so before running the filter. It'll finish sooner and the results won't be noticeably different.

If you have a layered file, create a composite layer above all the other layers. That's the one the filter affects but the other layers are unchanged.

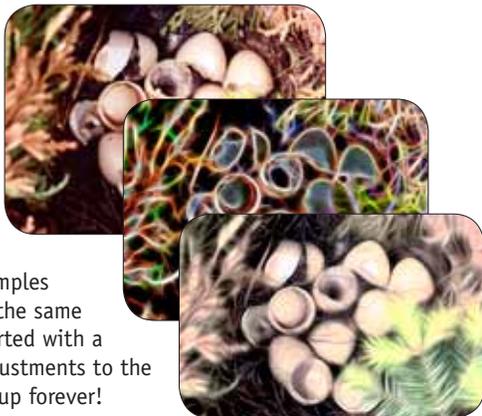
If your background is plain, *Fractalius 2* adds more detail in. This can distract from your main subject. Consider working on a file with a transparent background.

Without any distractions I could play with these presets and sliders all day long. If I only knew exactly what each slider does, wouldn't that make things easier? Unfortunately there's no FAQ or other help.

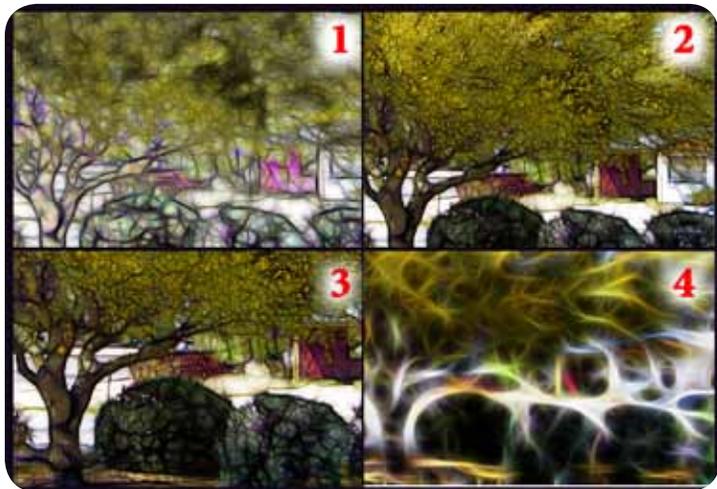
Going to the "Samples and Tutorials" link on the websire leads to a page with a thumbnail sample for each Redfield filter. From there the *Fractalius* sample/link displays a dozen images with different presets applied.

There's nothing about which preset created which effect. That's at the "Fractalius Preset List" page using one image for all 24 effects, each labeled. It's a sort of preview you could download and consult to pick one preset over another as a starting point. But don't depend on it too much.

At left is the Glow Wire example from the site. At right is the image I started with, the default result from running Glow Wire, and my final result after some modifications.



Below are zoomed-in examples showing four versions of the same image. In each case I started with a preset and then made adjustments to the sliders. I could keep this up forever!



At right is a photo modified twice, with both versions overlaying the original in differing layer modes and a certain amount of masking. The possibilities are endless!

Do I like this filter? Yes, very much, although right now it seems I spend a lot of time moving sliders around before getting the effect I want.

Knowing what each slider does would be extraordinarily useful. Labels such as "Fractal Radius," "Diffusion" and "Scarify" don't really explain what the results will be, and even when moving the sliders around it's not always that apparent what the change is in the preview window.

However, practice is more useful than anything else in learning the ins-and-outs of software. I have no doubt as I continue using *Fractalus 2* we'll become best buddies. I do recommend it if you'd like to add a little "fire" to your work. Don't forget to check out what else the site offers.

About: Fractalus 2.40

- Creator:** Redfield Plug-ins
<http://www.redfieldplugins.com/>
- Price:** \$39.90 US\$
- Requires:** Adobe *Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements* or *Fireworks*
Corel *Paint Shop Pro X* or *Photo Paint*
Ulead *Photo Impact*

