

## Bugs & Wish list

Please update theme creation documentation | Tiki Wiki CMS Groupware :: Development  
Please update theme creation documentation

### Status

● Open

### Subject

Please update theme creation documentation

### Version

21.x Regression

25.x

26.x

### Category

- Documentation (or Advocacy)

### Feature

Others

### Resolution status

New

### Submitted by

hman

### Lastmod by

hman

### Rating

★★★★★ (0) ?

### Related-to

- ✕ Migrating 18.8 to 21.4 fails utterly, breaks layout

### Description

Since I was critized for editing an existing Tiki theme to fit my needs on two installations, I wanted to give the "official" way a try.

So I visited

<https://themes.tiki.org/Creating-a-Tiki-theme>

which is the official documentation. I have the impression (but cannot prove this, of course) that I am the first to actually use this...

It fails. On step 1 (Three Ways to Make a New Theme).

<https://themes.tiki.org/Three-Ways-to-Make-a-New-Theme>

Btw, BOTH pages are dated 2016... There are three alternatives listed:

1. Link to a Bootstrap.css File for a New Theme
2. Add a Style Sheet to the Themes Directory
3. Make a Less-Compiled Tiki Theme

Less...

There is another documentation from Tiki:

<https://themes.tiki.org/Updating-a-Tiki-theme-from-Bootstrap-3-to-4>

to which I was pointed recently. Besides the fact that it hasn't been updated in 4 years, it still reads as "work in progress". Like this table:

Less function	SCSS equivalent
coming soon	coming soon

"coming soon". How "soon" is 4 years? Another example

"I'll add a table here of the changes I've had to make when updating Tiki themes, but in the meantime" So we do not learn what changes had to be made, and we cannot learn from Tiki's devs what pitfalls were discovered. And there the documentation ends...

Bootstrap's documentation, on the other hand

<https://getbootstrap.com/docs/4.0/migration/>

isn't very useful as well. It addresses only developers who are fully rooted in the entire Bootstrap universe. Frankly, I understand not even half of the stuff.

Importance

7

Easy to solve?

3

Priority

21

Demonstrate Bug (Tiki 19+)

Please demonstrate your bug on [show2.tiki.org](https://show2.tiki.org)

Version: `trunk` ▼

Demonstrate Bug (older Tiki versions)

Ticket ID

8159

Created

Saturday 30 July, 2022 17:30:14 GMT-0000

by hman

LastModif

Saturday 30 July, 2022 17:49:48 GMT-0000

Comments



hman 30 Jul 22 18:23 GMT-0000

Apart from that, the second thing I wanted to try is to compile the original of my theme for myself, to make sure I understand the process. As Geo is written in Less, that of course implies Less. But there are some errors in the Less source files.

In `/themes/Geo/less/bootstrap-variables.less` in line 81 it says



```
@icon-font-path: "../../../vendor/twitter/bootstrap/fonts/";
```

There is no directory /vendor/twitter. Supposedly this should read  
../../../../vendors\_bundled/vendor/twitter.



hman 30 Jul 22 18:27 GMT-0000

And in /themes/Geo/less/Geo.less is



```
//@import "../../../vendor/twitter/bootstrap/less/utilities.less";
```

Same issue Commented out, so that's no issue.



hman 30 Jul 22 20:14 GMT-0000

Prerequisite not listed: PHP must be on 7.1 or newer, otherwise this error is thrown:



```
(uiserver):MYUSERID:~/MYDIRECTORY$ php console.php scss.compile MyTheme X-Powered-By:
PHP/4.4.9 Content-type: text/html <br /> <b>Parse error</b>: syntax error, unexpected T_STRING,
expecting T_CONSTANT_ENCAPSED_STRING or '(' in
<b>/homepages/0/MYHOMEPAGE/htdocs/MYDIRECTORY/console.php</b> on line <b>9</b><br
/>
```

My ISP (IONOS/1&1) still uses PHP 4.4.9 as a default. Newer PHP can be utilized by stating php7.1 instead of php (this is of course dependant on your ISP). But PHP level should be listed as a prerequisite for this command line call. And, btw, of course command line access (or rather, SSH) is also required and should be listed. This could mean about half of the user/admins can't do it anyway, not everyone has SSH access... I was only granted SSH four years ago by my ISP...



hman 31 Jul 22 16:48 GMT-0000

Ok, after reading

<https://dev.tiki.org/Using-Less-CSS-with-Tiki>

I learned that the syntax with Less used to use colon instead of the point. But



php7.1 console.php less:compile Geo

just yields



Status: 404 Not Found Content-type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 No input file specified.

So I thought "maybe the syntax to select a theme was changed, too". I then followed the above mentioned documentation for Less and wanted to call the built-in help by entering



php console.php less:compile --help

(with or without the change to call PHP 7.1). Both yield only



Status: 404 Not Found Content-type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 No input file specified.

Hm, could it be that the Less documentation is outdated as well? There is no timestamp to indicate the date/time of the last edit...

Yes, I did try with a corrected /themes/Geo/less/bootstrap-variables.less and with the original as well. Same error.



hman 31 Jul 22 20:19 GMT-0000

Line 7 of /themes/Geo/less/Geo.less reads



```
@import "../base_files/less/tiki-variables"; // Values/definitions for Tiki variables (outside of Bootstrap variables) such as tiki-color_selectors.less.
```

There is no file /tiki/themes/base\_files/less/tiki-variables, but a tiki-variables.less. But changing this in the script did nothing to alleviate the error message...



Gary Cunningham-Lee 01 Aug 22 05:42 GMT-0000

Regarding your comment "Since I was criticized for editing an existing Tiki theme to fit my needs on two installations . . . ." I'm sorry you interpreted any remarks to you as criticism; they were not intended that way.

It has indeed been a long time since documentation on how to make or update a Tiki theme has been updated, and it may be a while yet, as probably both Bootstrap 4 and 5 will be covered by the documentation update since we're close to a public release with Bootstrap 5. In the meantime, I recommend copying and renaming the files of an existing Tiki theme, one in the version of Tiki that you are using. For example, choose whichever theme is closest to how you want yours to look. Then you know that this theme's files compile without error. Edit the variables in the theme's variables file, and recompile to see the effects of the edits.

Alternatively, I'm uploading to this page a Geo.zip file that may be useful. It has both less and scss subdirectories because it's from a Tiki installation backup from when I was making the compiler transition. I can't guarantee that it works but it might, so I'm offering it to be tried but I don't want to spend time discussing it if it doesn't work.

About the errors you reported, keep in mind that the the paths did work correctly at the time the themes were compiled, but may have changed, or apparently have changed, since that time. Also, import statements don't require the .less (or .scss) file type extension; it's good to check the Less or SCSS/SASS documentation pages about this sort of thing. About the compiler errors, I'm afraid I can't help with those as I don't have any recent experience with Less.



hman 01 Aug 22 12:54 GMT-0000

Thanks. But I have to make this statement:

When I got the first Geo for Tiki 18.2 from you, there was NO working documentation on how the official way to create a customized theme actually works, and even today (years later) there is still no working documentation on that.

Does that sound like an attractive perspective for investing labor?

Please, devs, be honest to your admins/users. Do not promise that customization is encouraged, as long as there is no documentation.

"I recommend copying and renaming the files of an existing Tiki theme, one in the version of Tiki that you are using."

This won't work. Currently I am using 18.8. and all it's themes are written in Less...

"For example, choose whichever theme is closest to how you want yours to look. Then you know that this theme's files compile without error."

Well, Geo was just that. But it does not compile without error, at least not the Geo I got so far. I need documentation on this call of console.php, but in regard to Less and to Sass (Less only to get the assurance that I understand the compilation process, because I have a working precompiled Geo to compare. Sass for current operation).

That is the reason why I edited the CSS: There I got control over the ENTIRE design process. All tools are local, and part of a standard Linux distro with no surprises and with up-to-date local documentation (man!).

Yes, gedit /themes/Geo/css/Geo.css wasn't intuitive or comfortable, but it WORKED.

What is the design target of your attached newer version? 21, 24 or 25? Most useful would be 21.4 (and later), as this is my target. I will not skip LTS. I need to have a stable, at least mostly (!)

functioning LTS as a fallback before any advancement can be risked. I hoped 18 could be that, it wasn't.



Gary Cunningham-Lee 01 Aug 22 13:22 GMT-0000

“

*"For example, choose whichever theme is closest to how you want yours to look. Then you know that this theme's files compile without error."*

*Well, Geo was just that. But it does not compile without error,*

Perhaps you misunderstood what I wrote. What I suggested was to copy the files of an existing theme in Tiki in the version/instance that you're using. To expand on this a bit more, then rename the theme's directory and the theme's less/themename.less or scss/themename.scss file, using the same new theme name. Now compile this and you will get a stylesheet called themename.css, where all instances of "themename" are the name you chose to use. Since this new theme is identical to the one you copied, and the copied one does compile successfully, then the copy should also compile successfully.

Is this how you tried to produce a Geo.css?

If it doesn't compile successfully then as a test try compiling one of the other themes in your Tiki installation without any editing. If that theme doesn't compile either, then it would seem there's a problem with your work setup, because these themes all compiled successfully before being released in a Tiki package.

Then variables can be edited to create the desired appearance and the files can be recompiled, for example, after each edit. The process works when the files are in place and the compiler is supported, as predictably as editing CSS, but with the power of using variables and other advantages of Less/SCSS.

I believe the Tiki version of the Geo.zip I uploaded is Tiki 21.0.



hman 02 Aug 22 08:21 GMT-0000

"Since this new theme is identical to the one you copied, and the copied one does compile successfully, then the copy should also compile successfully.

Is this how you tried to produce a Geo.css?"

Actually, I didn't change anything. For starters, I wanted to make sure I understood the procedure, so I tried to compile the completely unmodified Geo, and it doesn't compile (see above).

"If that theme doesn't compile either, then it would seem there's a problem with your work setup, because these themes all compiled successfully before being released in a Tiki package."

Well, my "work setup" is a successfully running Tiki installation (running on rented webspace,

with SSH access. Quite possibly, but undocumented: I assume the web space to be a Docker instance. I can log into it via SSH, see/control all processes, but I cannot install/modify binaries like PHP itself, so it is not a "full" VM). Calling from Apache, PHP is 7.1 (because Tiki 18.8 demands that), calling from command line it is either 4.4. (the default of Ionos/1&1) or 7.1 if called via php7.1 instead of php. Everything else is part of console.php...

"I believe the Tiki version of the Geo.zip I uploaded is Tiki 21.0."

The readme says 15.0-18.0, which can't really be true. It has both Less and Sass directories, but Tiki 18 knows no Sass and thus can't compile Sass. For that, Geo would have to rest on a 21 installation, which in turn has a vastly different Bootstrap. So far I did not have the time to compare the Less to the Sass files to see the changes...



hman 02 Aug 22 20:34 GMT-0000

Geo.css increased massively in size. In the 18.2 version, Geo.css measured 165,3 kByte, in the 15.x-18.x version that went up to 263,8 kBytes. By the looks of it, I'd guess this is no longer an 18 version, compiled from the Less sources, but a 21 or later version compiled from the Sass sources, as it starts out with the loong color definition list.



hman>hman 02 Aug 22 21:02 GMT-0000

Replied to Geo.css... Confirmed. Geo 15.x-18.x breaks the layout on 18.8. Interestingly in strikingly similar same way my modified Geo was breaking on 21: The left module zone appears right of the Wiki content zone, and the right module zone appears at the far right of the page... The 18.2 version of Geo just works (only lacking all of my customization, fonts and spacing work, but apart from that it works). Now let's see if it compiles Less...



hman>hman 02 Aug 22 21:10 GMT-0000

Replied to Confirmed....

Different error message coming up than before:



```
(uiserver):MYUSERID:~/tiki-18.8$php7.1 console.php less:compile Geo Invalid location
for less files requested. Try: php -f console.php less:compile themes Clearing all caches
Set-Cookie: PHPSESSID-MYID; path=/; HttpOnly Expires: Thu, 19 Nov 1981 08:52:00
GMT Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache, must-revalidate Pragma: no-cache Set-Cookie:
PHPSESSID-MYID%3D%3D; expires=Wed, 02-Aug-2023 21:06:30 GMT; Max-
Age=31536000; path=/; HttpOnly Set-Cookie: javascript_enabled_detect=1; expires=Wed,
02-Aug-2023 21:06:30 GMT; Max-Age=31536000 Content-type: text/html; charset=UTF-8
```

Without a documentation on the syntax of console.php Less/Sass compile function, this is more or less flying blindly...



hman>hman 02 Aug 22 21:26 GMT-0000

Replied to  
Different...

Ah, less:compile wants a -o parameter. Now I get



```
(uiserver):MYUSERID:~/tiki-18.8$ php7.1 console.php less:compile -o Geo Compiling less
files from themes php vendor_bundled/vendor/oyejorge/less.php/bin/lessc
themes/Geo/less/Geo.less themes/Geo/css/Geo.css Content-type: text/html<br /><b>Parse
error</b>: syntax error, unexpected '.', expecting '(' in
<b>MYHOMEDIR/htdocs/tiki-18.8/vendor_bundled/vendor/oyejorge/less.php/bin/lessc</b>
> on line <b>63</b><br /> Clearing all caches Set-Cookie: PHPSESSID-MYID; path=/;
HttpOnly Expires: Thu, 19 Nov 1981 08:52:00 GMT Cache-Control: no-store, no-cache,
must-revalidate Pragma: no-cache Set-Cookie: PHPSESSID-MYID%3D%3D; expires=Wed,
02-Aug-2023 21:23:36 GMT; Max-Age=31536000; path=/; HttpOnly Set-Cookie:
javascript_enabled_detect=1; expires=Wed, 02-Aug-2023 21:23:36 GMT; Max-
Age=31536000 Content-type: text/html; charset=UTF-8
```

That line reads



```
echo "lessc " . Less_Version::version . " (less.php)\n\n";
```



Gary Cunningham-Lee 03 Aug 22 08:23 GMT-0000

Like I said when uploading that file, it contains both less and scss directories because it's from the time of transition from one compiler to the other. It's from my working files in a dev installation so the readme isn't necessarily accurate. If it was helpful, fine, if not, just toss it and forget it. I don't have time to discuss it.

More generally, is there something holding you back from updating your website to a more current Tiki version? There have been two LTS releases since Tiki 18 and I believe Tiki 18 is in security-update-only mode now. I'm sorry, but, as you know, the time people have available to respond to bug reports, etc., is very limited and the hope is that an answer provided here can potentially help other people with similar problems. This is why we don't have the luxury of helping out with obsolete scripts in security-updates-only Tiki releases. Thanks in advance for your understanding.



hman>Gary Cunningham-Lee 03 Aug 22 21:32 GMT-0000

Replied to



Like I...

Now THAT is a question that I really did not expect from you... I thought I had laid out the reasons in great detail, possibly in too much detail for the taste of some here on d.t.o...

"More generally, is there something holding you back from updating your website to a more current Tiki version?"




Gary Cunningham-Lee>hman 04 Aug 22 17:01 GMT-0000

Replied to

Now THAT... I don't recall or was never aware. Can you provide a link?

#### Attachments

filename	created	hits	comment	version	filetype
 Geo.zip	01 Aug 22 05:46 GMT-0000	0	May or may not work		

The original document is available at  
<https://dev.tiki.org/item8159-Please-update-theme-creation-documentation>