

Windows Azure Storage Plugin for WordPress

Introduction

This WordPress plugin allows you to use Windows Azure Storage Service to host your media for your WordPress powered blog. Windows Azure Storage is an effective way to scale storage of your site without having to go through the expense of setting up the infrastructure for a content delivery.

Features

Key features of this plug-in are listed below,

Transparent Storage for End User

Actual storage location details are transparent to the end user.

Automatic File Upload to Windows Azure Storage

Uploaded media file are automatically saved into configured Windows Azure Storage Blob Container without any extra steps. Media files will be delivered by Windows Azure Storage, instead of your own web host

Highly Configurable

This plugin provides several options for configuration underlying Windows Azure Storage service.

In future, following options will be added,

- Global settings: Administrator will be able to set single Windows Azure Storage account for all users. A separate Blob Container will be created transparently for each user. Optionally administrator can set a single Blob Container for all users.
- Per user setting: WordPress Blogger will be allowed to bring his own Windows Azure Storage account to store his media files. This may be needed if blogger wants use his existing media files and does not want to duplicate them.

Search Media Files

Provides ability to search media files based on criterions (like tag, file type, creation date etc.) provided by user. The plugin performs search using Windows Azure Storage Services APIs available in PHP SDK for Azure.

Target Users

Personal blogging web sites

This is for a personal blogging web site that uses WordPress software. Such user should not invest in infrastructure setup for storage and can use his Windows Azure Storage account. Global account settings with single Blob Container would be sufficient for such user.

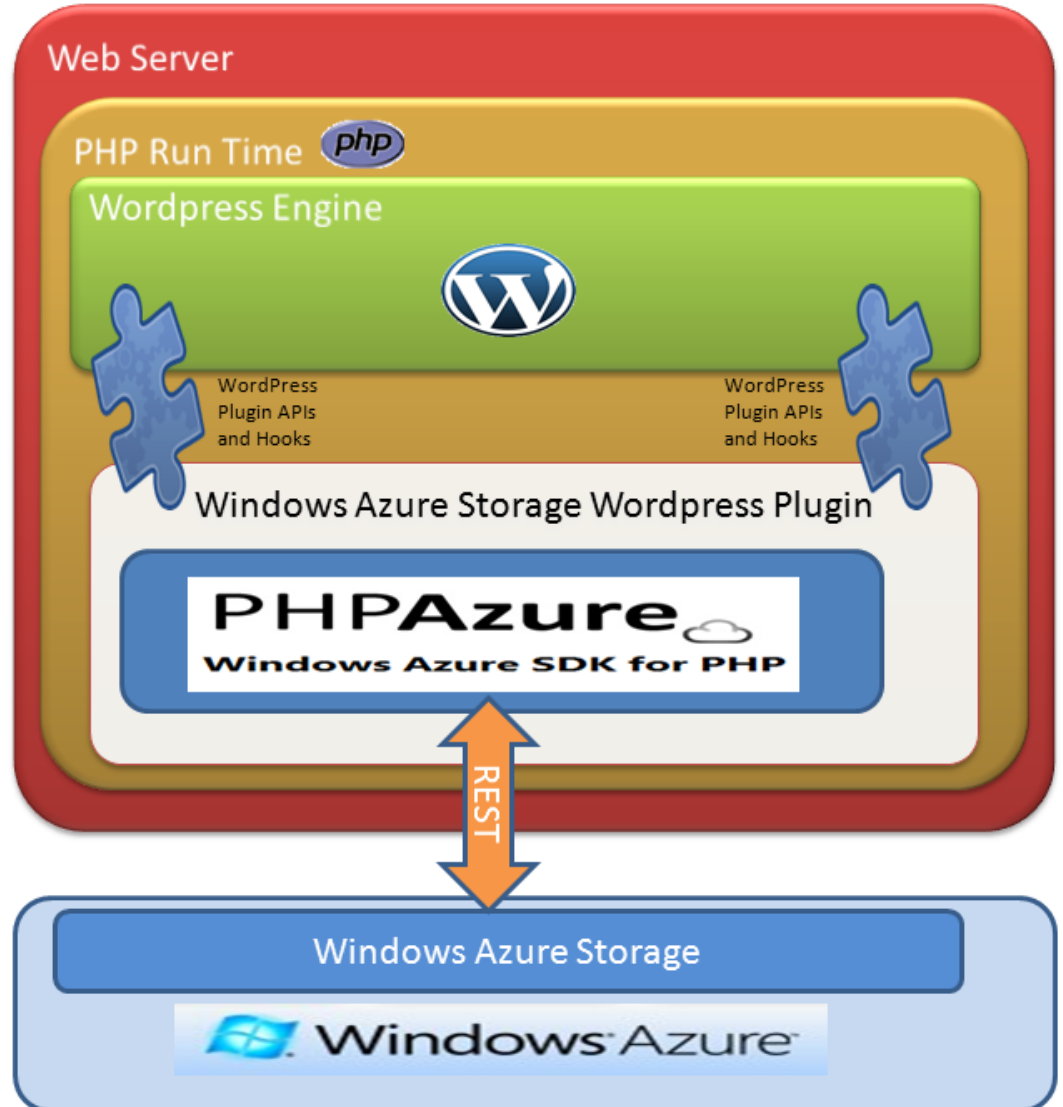
WordPress blog hosters

There are several professional web hosting providers who offer blogging services based on WordPress software. These include www.wordpress.com, <http://www.bluehost.com/track/wp/one>. Each such provider may contain thousands of users and millions of blog posts.

Windows Azure will be a natural option for such providers to reduce storage cost.

Architecture

WordPress Plugin APIs allow easy modification, customization, and enhancement to a WordPress blog. High level architecture diagrams for this plugin are shown below,

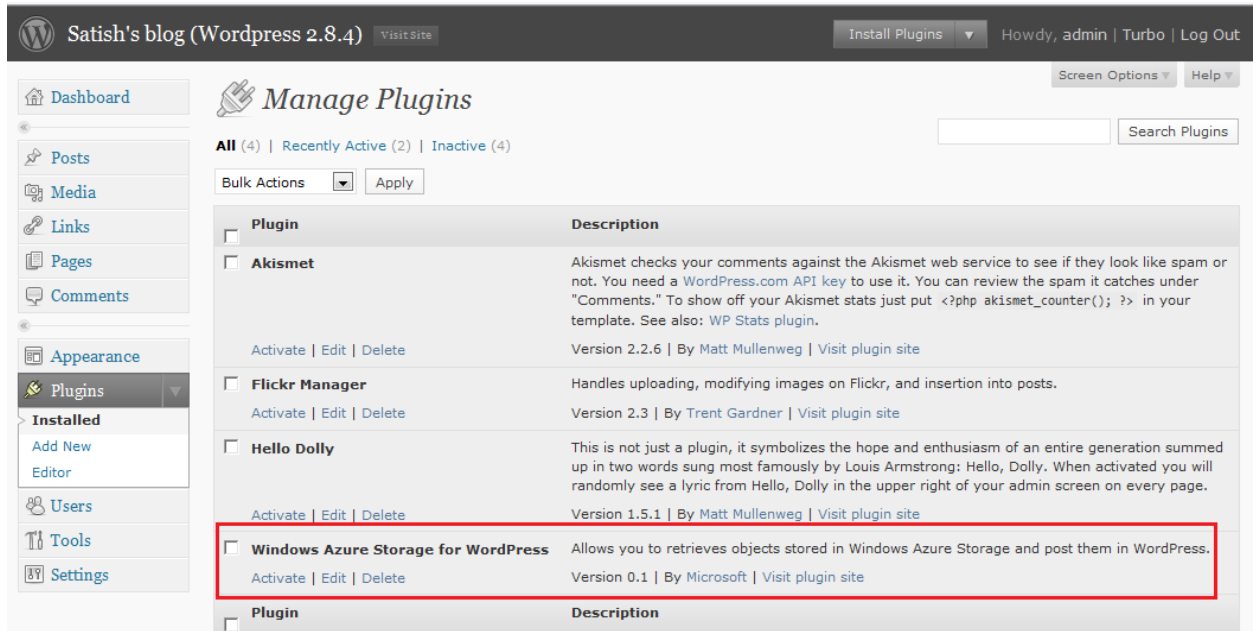


Installation Instructions

- Extract the Windows Azure Storage Plugin **windows-azure-storage.zip** to the plugins directory of the WordPress installation.

e.g. if WordPress is installed in “/var/www/html/wordpress” directory, extract the **windows-azure-storage.zip** file into directory “/var/www/html/wordpress/wp-content/plugins”.

- To activate the plugin, log in into the WordPress as administrator and navigate to list of plugins. Then check the associated checkbox for the plugin and click on “**Activate**” link.



Configure Windows Azure Storage Account

After activating the plugin, user needs to configure it with their Windows Azure Storage Account using following instruction;

- To activate the plugin, log in into the WordPress as administrator and navigate to “**Windows Azure**” sub-Tab inside “**Settings**” Tab.
- Enter Windows Azure Storage account name in “**Storage Account Name**” text box and enter Windows Azure Storage primary access key in “**Primary Access Key**” text box and then click on “**Save Changes**” button. If the underlying Web Server uses http proxy for connecting to the internet, please provide http proxy server details in “**HTTP Proxy Host Name**”, “**HTTP Proxy Port Name**” and “**HTTP Proxy Credentials**” fields.

Pages
Comments
Appearance
Plugins 2
Users
Tools
Settings

General
Writing
Reading
Discussion
Media
Privacy
Permalinks
Miscellaneous
Windows Azure

For more details on Windows Azure Storage Services, please visit the [Windows Azure Platform web-site](#).

This plugin is developed in PHP and uses PHP SDK for Azure (<http://phpazure.codeplex.com/>).

Plugin Web Site: <http://wpazurestorage.codeplex.com/>
Plugin Documentation: <http://wpazurestorage.codeplex.com/docs>

Windows Azure Storage Plugin Settings

If you do not have Windows Azure Storage Account, please [register](#) for Azure Services.

Store Account Name

Primary Access Key

Default Storage Container

CNAME

Note: Use this option if you would like to display image urls belonging to your domain like <http://MyDo>. This CNAME must start with [http\(s\)](http://) and administrator will have to update DNS entries accordingly.

HTTP Proxy Host Name

HTTP Proxy Port Name

HTTP Proxy Credentials

Use Windows Azure Storage as for default upload ☐ Use Windows Azure Storage when uploading via WordPress' upload tab.
Note: Uncheck this to revert back to using your own web host for storage at anytime.

Save Changes

- Once Windows Azure Storage account details are set correctly, the page will be refreshed and “**Default Storage Container**” drop down will be populated with all available blob containers associated with the storage account. Please select the one container for storing your media files and click on “**Save Changes**” button.

Windows Azure Storage Settings

If you do not have Windows Azure Storage Account, please [register](#) for Azure Services.

Store Account Name

Primary Access Key

Default Storage Container

- All media files stored in Windows Azure Storage will have URL like “<http://<AccountName>.blob.core.windows.net/<ContainerName>/<MediaFileName>>”. One can hide usage of underlying Windows Azure Storage account by defining CNAME entry in the “**CNAME**” text box and then click on “**Save Changes**” button. This CNAME has to start with [http\(s\)](http://) and user will have to update DNS entries appropriately to route request back to blob.core.windows.net.

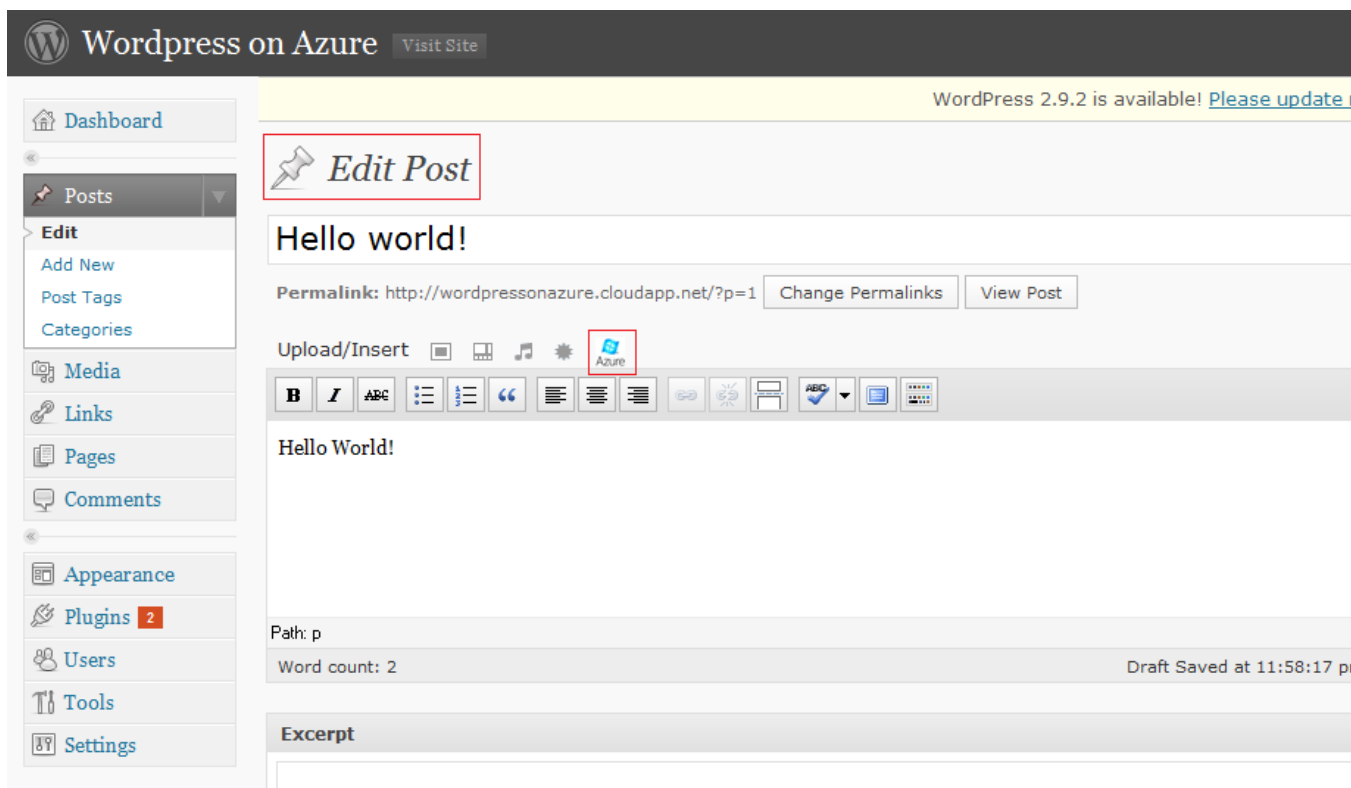
CNAME

Note: Use this option if you would like to display image urls belonging to your domain like `http://MyDomain.com/` instead of `http://YourAccountName.blob.core.windows.net/`. This CNAME must start with `http(s)` and administrator will have to update DNS entries accordingly.

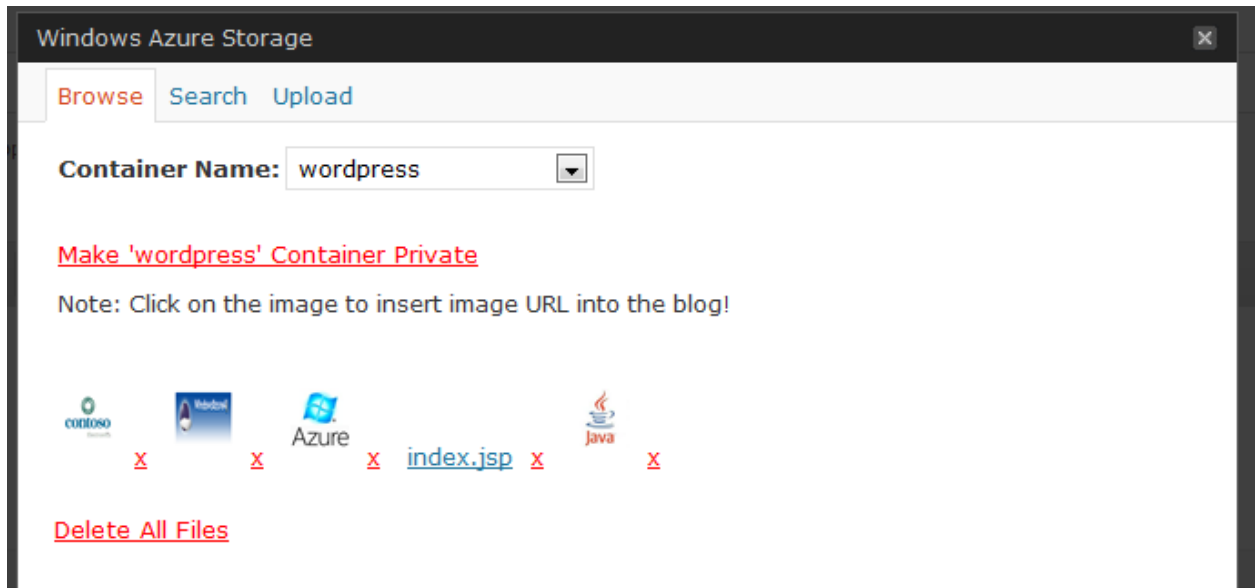
- User can set Windows Azure Storage as default location for storing all media file uploaded via “WordPress upload tab”. File uploads will be automatically saved into configured Windows Azure Storage Blob Container without any extra steps. Just tick the “**Use Windows Azure Storage as default upload**” checkbox and click on “**Save Changes**” button.

Using the Plugin

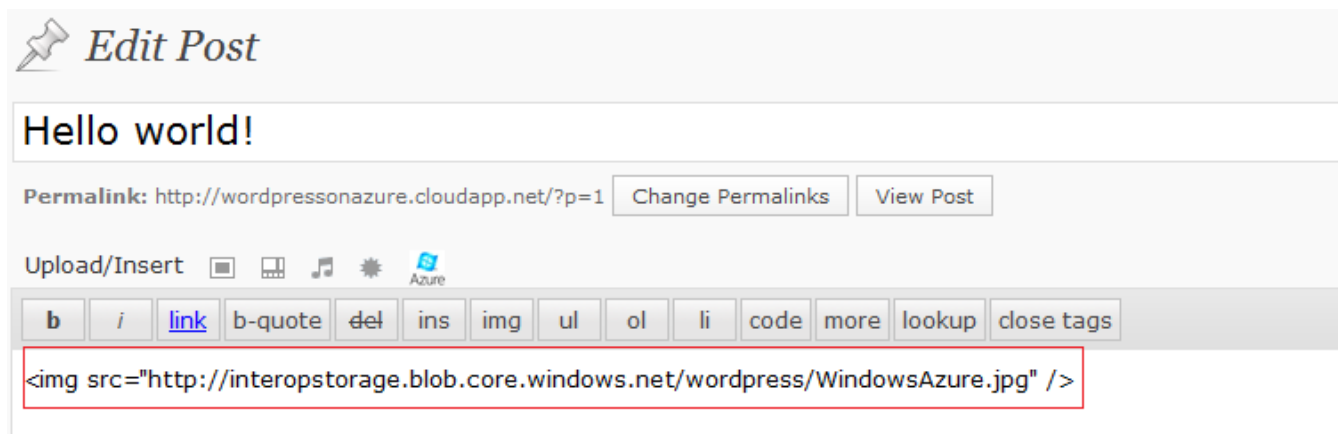
- Once this plugin is configured, user will be able to view a new toolbar button on the “**Edit Post**” page. This button has the “**Windows Azure Logo**” as shown in following diagram.



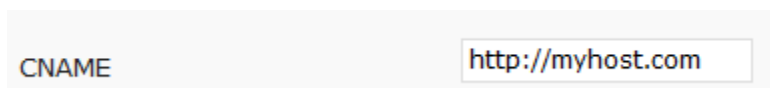
- Clicking on the toolbar button, following “**Windows Azure Storage**” dialog will be displayed.



- This dialog will have 3 tabs: Browse, Search and Upload.
- Browse Tab is the default tab and shows all files available in the default container set. For image files, it shows small thumbnail of the image.
- User can change the container by selecting different item in the “Container Name” dropdown. The page will be refreshed and files in the new container will be displayed.
- To insert the media file in the blog post, user has to click on the image in the list of files displayed on screen. Once user clicks on image, the dialog is closed and an image link is added into the text area of the post being edited. HTML view of such post is shown below. Look at the URL for image. It points to the Windows Azure storage host for blobs i.e. blob.core.windows.net.



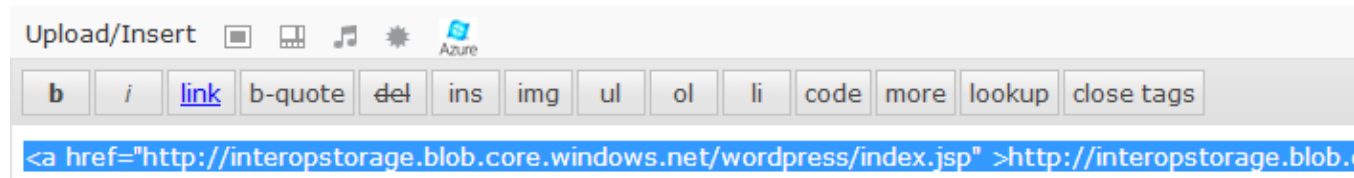
- If user has defined a custom CNAME as follows,



Then the added image URL will look like follows,



- If the file type is different than image, then the html hyperlink is added to the edit post text area as shown below,

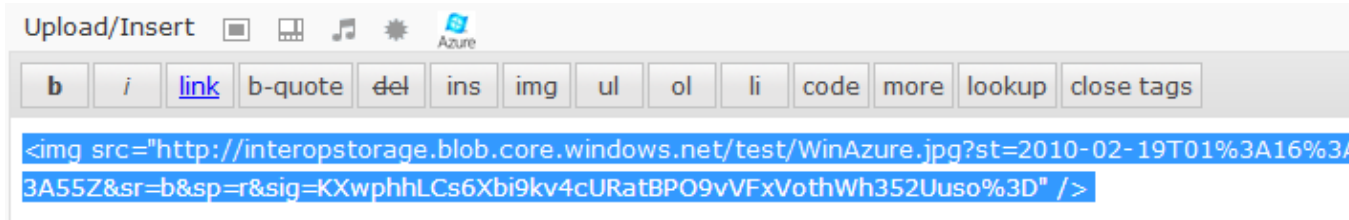


- To upload a new file, click on the “**Upload**” Tab. Following controls will be shown in Upload Tab.

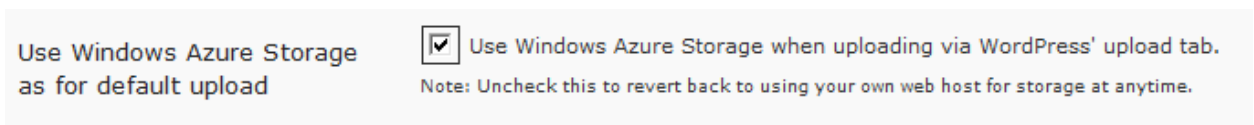
- Default Container name will be uploading new file, but user can change container by selecting different container from the drop down.
- User will be able to provide custom tag for the file to be uploaded. Use comma as separator for multiple tags.
- Click the “**Browse...**” button and select the file to be uploaded using File Open Dialog.
- “**Expiration Duration**” text box will be disabled for public container because all files in public container never expire. But if a private container is selected, then user can set

expiration duration on the file to be uploaded. The URL associated with such file will be valid only for the specified duration. Public users will not be able to view this file once the URL expires. This feature uses shared signature feature of the Windows Azure Blob Storage.

- Such file having expiration duration set will be added to the edit post text using associated shared signature, as shown below,



- If Windows Azure Storage is used for default file upload using following option, then all file uploads happening via default media upload dialogs will be routed to Windows Azure Storage account. Same files will be displayed in Browse Tab in the Windows Azure Storage popup dialog.



WordPress 2.9.2 is available

Dashboard

Media


Upload New Media

Choose files to upload **Select Files** Cancel Upload

You are using the Flash uploader. Problems? Try the [Browser uploader](#) instead.

After a file has been uploaded, you can add titles and descriptions.

Contoso [Hide](#)

 Contoso.gif
image/gif
2010-02-19 02:21:44

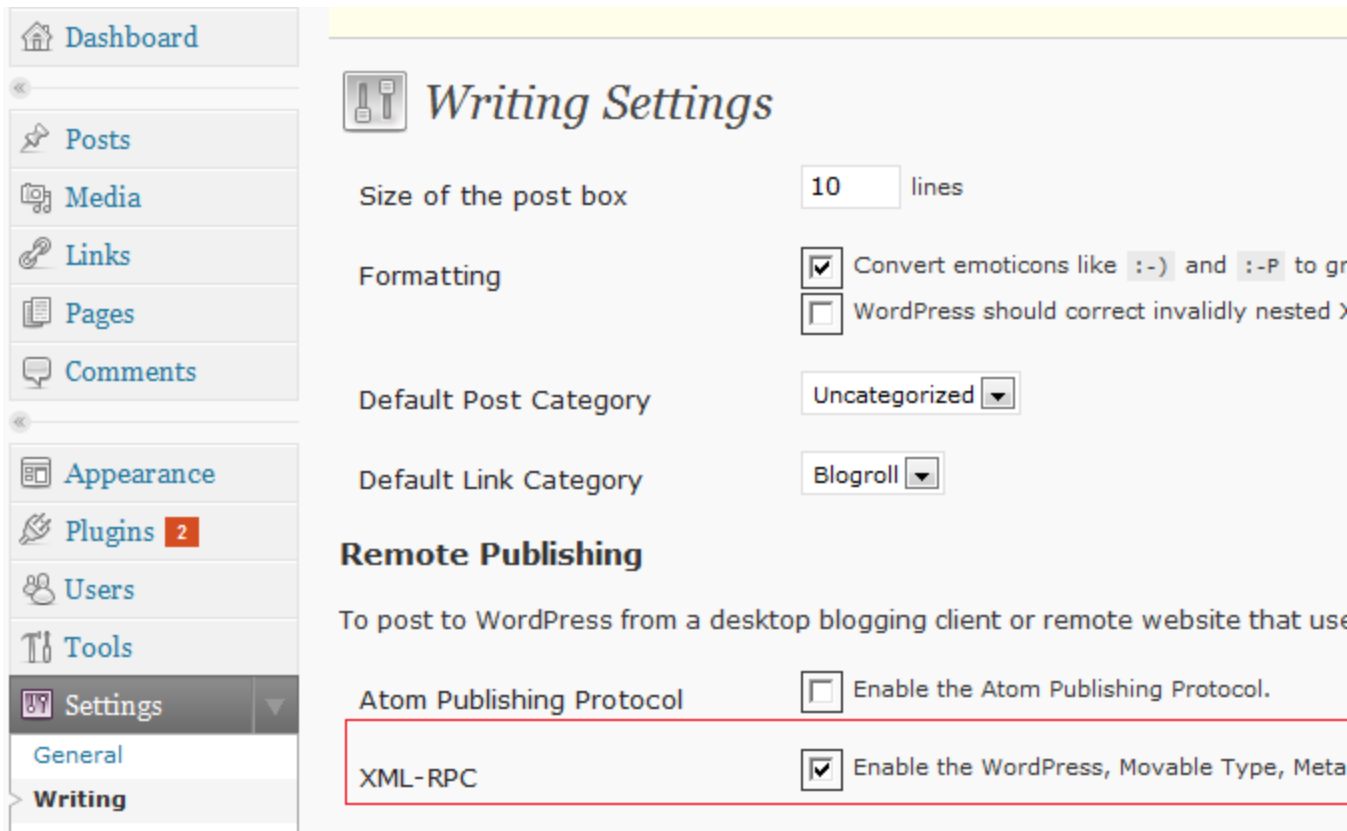
Title * Contoso

Caption
Also used as alternate text for the image

Description

File URL <http://interopstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpress/2010/02/Conto>
Location of the uploaded file.

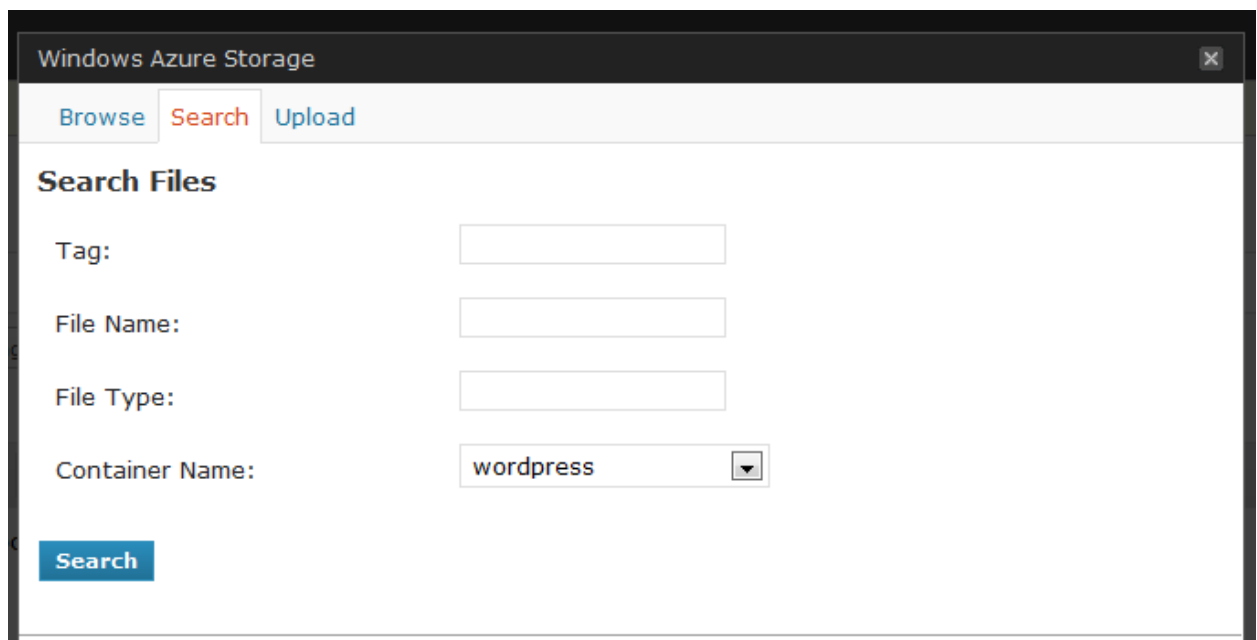
- If the XML-RPC option is set in “**Writing Settings->Remote Publishing**” as shown below and Windows Azure Storage is set for default file upload, then all file uploads happening via XML-RPC will be routed to the configured Windows Azure Storage account.



The image shows the WordPress 'Writing Settings' page. On the left is a sidebar menu with options: Dashboard, Posts, Media, Links, Pages, Comments, Appearance, Plugins (2), Users, Tools, Settings (selected), General, and Writing. The main content area is titled 'Writing Settings' and contains several settings:

- Size of the post box:** A text input field with '10' and a label 'lines'.
- Formatting:** Two checkboxes: 'Convert emoticons like :-) and :-P to gr' (checked) and 'WordPress should correct invalidly nested X' (unchecked).
- Default Post Category:** A dropdown menu showing 'Uncategorized'.
- Default Link Category:** A dropdown menu showing 'Blogroll'.
- Remote Publishing:** A section header followed by the text 'To post to WordPress from a desktop blogging client or remote website that use'. It contains two checkboxes: 'Atom Publishing Protocol' (unchecked) and 'XML-RPC' (checked). The 'XML-RPC' row is highlighted with a red border.

- Search Tab shows following controls,



The image shows a 'Windows Azure Storage' window with a 'Search' tab selected. The window has a title bar with 'Windows Azure Storage' and a close button. Below the title bar are three tabs: 'Browse', 'Search' (active), and 'Upload'. The main content area is titled 'Search Files' and contains four search criteria with input fields:

- Tag:** An empty text input field.
- File Name:** An empty text input field.
- File Type:** An empty text input field.
- Container Name:** A dropdown menu with 'wordpress' selected.

At the bottom left of the search area is a blue 'Search' button.

- Default container is selected for search. User can change the container to be searched for specified criteria. User can also search in all containers.

- User can search files based on Tag, File Name and File Type. Logical AND operation is performed on multiple criterions.
- Click on “**Search**” after specifying various criterions. Result will be displayed in the “**Browse**” Tab as follows.



Known Issues WordPress MU edition (prior to WordPress 3.0)

This plugin does not work out-of-box with the WordPress MU (Multi User) edition. The only workaround is to edit the `\wp-admin\options.php` file within the WordPress MU installation. Perform following changes in this file,

- Open `\wp-admin\options.php` file and search for the function call “`check_admin_referer`”. This call is inside one if condition and looks like follows,

```
switch($action) {
case 'update':
    if ( isset($_POST[ 'option_page' ]) ) {
        $option_page = $_POST[ 'option_page' ];
        check_admin_referer( $option_page - '-options' );
    }
}
```

- WordPress MU edition does not contain any else block in this if statement. Add following else block to this if-statement and save options.php file.

```
switch($action) {
case 'update':
    if ( isset($_POST[ 'option_page' ]) ) {
        $option_page = $_POST[ 'option_page' ];
        check_admin_referer( $option_page - '-options' );
    } else {
        // Needed by Windows Azure Storage Plugin For WordPress MU edition
        $option_page = 'options';
        check_admin_referer( 'update-options' );
    }
}
```

For details, please refer the article <http://mu.wordpress.org/forums/topic/12474>

Resources

- For more details on Windows Azure Storage Services, please visit the [Windows Azure Platform web-site](#).
- Windows Azure SDK for PHP is at the core of this plugin. This SDK is available at <http://phpazure.codeplex.com/>.