Certbot Let's Encrypt client

CONCEPTS

Certbot needs root. Point your server at /etc/letsencrypt/live/<name>/, never at the archive copies.

Request certonly or run
↓ challenge
Validate HTTP-01 or DNS-01
↓ issue
Store live/<name>/
↓ renew
Renew timer + hooks

Certs are renewed from their saved settings in renewal/<name>.conf, so the plugin you used first is the one renewal uses.

OBTAIN

certbot certonly -d *<domain>*
Get a cert, do not install it

certbot --nginx -d *<domain>*
Get a cert and edit nginx config

-d *<a>* **-d** *<b>*
Several names on one cert

--cert-name *<name>*
Name the cert (file paths, housekeeping)

--expand -d *<old>* **-d** *<new>*
Add a name to an existing cert

--staging
Use the test CA (no rate-limit risk)

--key-type rsa / ecdsa
Pick the key algorithm

AUTHENTICATORS

--webroot -w *<dir>*
Write challenge files into a live web root

--standalone
Run a temporary server on port 80

--dns-cloudflare / --dns-route53
DNS-01 via a DNS provider plugin

--dns-cloudflare-credentials *<file>*
Credentials file for the DNS plugin

INSPECT AND RENEW

certbot certificates
List certs, names, expiry and paths

certbot renew
Renew every cert that is due

certbot renew --dry-run
Test renewal against the staging CA

certbot renew --cert-name *<name>*
Renew one cert only

--force-renewal
Renew even if not due

--deploy-hook *<cmd>*
Run after a successful renewal only

--pre-hook *<cmd>*
Run before each renewal attempt

--post-hook *<cmd>*
Run after each renewal attempt

certbot install --cert-name *<name>*
Deploy an existing cert to the server

MANAGE CERTS

certbot delete --cert-name *<name>*
Delete a cert and its renewal config

certbot revoke --cert-name *<name>*
Revoke a cert at the CA

FILES AND HOOKS

Under /etc/letsencrypt

Path	Holds
live/<name>/fullchain.pem	Cert plus chain: use this
live/<name>/privkey.pem	Private key
live/<name>/cert.pem, chain.pem	Parts, rarely needed
archive/<name>/	Numbered history
renewal/<name>.conf	Saved options for renew
renewal-hooks/{pre,deploy,post}/	Executable scripts
cli.ini	Global defaults

FILES AND HOOKS (cont.)

Hook scripts in renewal-hooks/ run in alphabetical order. Deploy hooks run only when a cert was actually renewed.

Logs are in /var/log/letsencrypt/. Never edit or delete files in /etc/letsencrypt by hand; use certbot delete.

Most packages install a systemd timer (certbot.timer) or cron job; check before adding your own.

RECIPES

Webroot cert, reload nginx on renew

```
sudo certbot certonly --webroot -w /var/www/example \
  -d example.com -d www.example.com \
  --deploy-hook 'systemctl reload nginx'
```

Wildcard via Cloudflare DNS

```
# /root/cf.ini holds dns_cloudflare_api_token = ...
chmod 600 /root/cf.ini
sudo certbot certonly --dns-cloudflare \
  --dns-cloudflare-credentials /root/cf.ini \
  -d example.com -d '*.example.com'
```

Standalone with the web server paused

```
sudo certbot renew \
  --pre-hook 'systemctl stop nginx' \
  --post-hook 'systemctl start nginx'
```

Auto-renew with cron if no timer exists

```
# /etc/cron.d/certbot
0 3,15 * * * root certbot renew -q \
  --deploy-hook 'systemctl reload nginx'
```