

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

Maine: "Our **Bison** hand-operated water pumps don't freeze up in the winter, don't need priming and work fast – after 7 pulls the bucket is full (ph 800 339-2601; www.bisonpumps.com). They're made with great attention to detail and we don't think we'll ever need to repair or replace any part. How many products can you say that about?"

Ricky Garrett, Commerce, Ga.: "I bought a 1964 **David Bradley** walk-behind garden tractor equipped with a Tecumseh 6 hp engine at a local tractor show, as well as some implements for it, including a turning plow, disk harrow, and cultivator, for \$350. When my grandfather and I got the tractor home we got it running, but it had a weak spark and carburetor problems. We installed a carburetor kit and points and condenser, and now the tractor runs like new. It always starts on the first or second pull. I used the tractor this year to plow our garden and disk it. Words can't describe how much this little tractor has impressed me."

"Seven years ago I was given a 1941 **Farmall A** tractor as a Christmas present. It wasn't a pretty sight. It had an old automobile seat, the engine was frozen solid, and the carburetor was gummed up. We started by removing the cylinder head and soaking the pistons with penetration oil. Then we fabricated a wooden block to fit inside the cylinder and hit it with a hammer to break it free. We replaced the head gasket, water pump and fan, the fan belt, and starter. The tractor is now more than 70 years old but still going strong. It just goes to show that back then, stuff was really built to last."

Jeff Lang, Newport News, Va.: "I like my **Troy-Bilt Bronco** riding mower equipped with a 20 hp Kohler engine and automatic transmission. I've used it for 2 years with no problems. It has a short turning radius and makes a smooth, even cut. I also use it in the fall for cleaning up and mulching leaves."

Chuck Hays, Kamloops, B.C.: "I like my **Magna Grecia** hoe (ph 250 598-0588; www.scytheworks.ca). It's made from high silicon hardened steel, with a small chopping blade on one side and two 12-in. tines on the other. It's designed to loosen the soil and cultivate between rows in gardens. I use mine, along with a broadfork in less rocky soils, to prepare some garden plots. The hoe works particularly good for pulling out grass roots around the edge of garden spaces."



June Gutierrez, St. Augustine, Fla.: "Last February we bought a new **Morningware** Halo oven to replace an older model (ph 877 439-5413; www.morningware.com). It cooks fresh or frozen foods quickly and uses less energy than our oven."

Richard Ball, Post Falls, Idaho: "Four years ago I bought a used 2007 **Gravely** zero-turn riding mower equipped with a Kohler 20 hp engine. It's easy to drive and has reduced my mowing time by half. The pto clutch stopped working because the wires were too short and got pulled apart. I had to lengthen them a little."

Gordon B. White, Orofino, Idaho: A 1998 4-WD **Ford** Explorer rates as Gordon's "best buy". "I've put more than 190,000 miles on it with no major problems. Many of the miles were in 4-WD and off-road. When driving on the highway in 2-WD it averaged 22 to 24 mpg. I traded up for a 2004 **Ford** Explorer and am well-pleased with it, too."

Paul Overgaard, Plentywood, Mont.: "It never quits but just runs and runs and is a

real workhorse," says Paul about his **Honda** H6522 diesel tractor equipped with a 6558 loader and a tiller. "I wish they would put this tractor back in production. Also, I wish I could find tiller tines and a Honda 6575 backhoe for it."

Greg Perry, Casper, Wyo.: "I bought a used 2007 **Ford** F-150 4-WD crewcab pickup with about 48,000 miles. It rides smooth and quiet and the stereo has an incredible sound. It can haul a cord of wood in the bed while pulling a car trailer with an 11,000-lb. load.

"In 2010 I got a **Sears Craftsman** cordless drill as a Christmas gift. The batteries don't hold a charge and the drill chuck won't tighten up enough to keep from slipping. New batteries are as expensive as the drill and don't keep a charge for more than 15 min. The loss of power gets frustrating when I'm working on a job away from an electrical outlet. I bought a new charger thinking that would solve the problem, but it didn't."

Ervin Johnson, LaCenter, Wash.: "I've owned several Lincoln welders in the past, but my 2011 **Lincoln** Power Mig 216 argon gas and rosin welder is the best yet."

Cody Barnett, Gooding, Idaho: Cody's the satisfied owner of a 1994 **Ford** F-350 crewcab, longbed pickup equipped with a 7.3-liter diesel engine and standard transmission. "It runs great with no major problems and gets 15 to 20 mpg, which I think is pretty good."

"My 2005 **Chevrolet** 3500 Duramax dually pickup is my worst buy. Everything on it that could go wrong did go wrong so it was always in the shop. It gets only 3 to 4 mpg. Now at about 120,000 miles it's ready for the junkyard."

Jeff Lang, Newport News, Va.: "I like my **Fiskars** ropeless pruning stik (ph 866 348-5661; www.fiskars.com). It has a rotating cutting head that lets me use it at any angle, and it's lightweight but strong and easy to operate. It handles up to 1 1/2-in. dia. tree branches and makes clean, smooth cuts. I can use it to reach down low into rose bushes or to trim up high. The no-rope design takes all the frustration out of trimming work. It's a great tool for anyone with arthritis. It was well worth the \$39.97 I paid for it at Home Depot."

Vern Nielsen, Mendon, Utah: Vern's "worst buy" is his **Cub Cadet** ZT50 zero-turn riding mower. "The biggest problem is with the blades, which have notches cut out of them and bend at the notch. In 3 years I've had to replace 2 sets of blades at a cost of \$51 per set. Also, one front wheel broke off and the other wheel has bent, and the tires have been replaced. I think the entire mower was designed to wear out in 2 to 3 years."

Herbert Korando, Jacob, Ill.: "I think the world of my 2010 **Polaris** Ranger 400 electric-powered, 4-WD EV utility vehicle. It has 620 hrs. on it without a bit of trouble. It's



powered by a 30 hp, 48-volt high efficiency AC-induced electric motor and comes with eight 12-volt batteries. It also comes with its own recharger that plugs into a standard 110-volt AC outlet. The company says it'll go 50 miles on a single charge. I recharge it every night so I never run out of power."

"I run all over our place with it and cover a lot of hilly terrain. I use it to do all my spraying, including drainage ditches. If something happened to my Polaris EV, I'd



Fodder chambers from All Season Greens produce 1,000 lbs. of livestock feed a day on Carl Blake's farm.

"Best Buy" Fodder Growing System

Carl Blake, Ionia, Iowa: "I love my two fodder chambers from All Season Greens (888 753-5158; www.allseasongreens.com). I am a specialty breed hog producer (see Vol. 35, No. 1) and feeding sprouted seeds to my entire herd has been saving us thousands of dollars a month."

"Each chamber produces 1,000 lbs. of feed a day. One sprouting chamber is equivalent to 143 acres of alfalfa in terms of productivity."

"I estimate that the \$60,000 units will pay for themselves in 9 months. A ton of fodder costs me \$95 for seed, water and electricity. Compare that to buying corn at today's prices."

"I feed young pigs sprouts that have only been growing for 3 to 4 days, so it's more like grain. Breeding animals receive sprouts that have been growing longer and are a foot or more tall."

"The young pigs grow faster on it than they do on corn. I have pigs in a pen with a feeder filled with pellets and corn, and they won't touch it. They prefer the sprouts. I've experimented with sprouts for a year and a half, and the pigs require less medication and fewer antibiotics. I had some pigs with pneumonia, and it went away in 3 days after they started on sprouts."

"I credit the enzymes in the greens, as well as the addition of a small amount of hydrogen peroxide to water circulating through the trays, for keeping the sprouts and my pigs healthy."

"I use a product called Oxyblast in my central water system and one called Oxypal for my sprouts. It has taken seed

buy another one right away."

Ernest See, Baker, W.Va.: "We've always used **Milwaukee** grinders here in our shop. Their 11-amp grinders in the 4 1/2 to 5-in. size are non-stopable. Of course, our old standbys are the 7-in., 15-amp grinders."

Robert Russin, Millerton, N.Y.: Robert's impressed with his **Work Sharp** knife and tool sharpener (ph 800 597-6170; www.worksharptools.com). It uses flexible, replaceable abrasive belts to sharpen a broad range of knives, including straight-bladed knives, curved knives, filet knives, serrated knives, gut hooks and almost any other shape of knife blade. "Three different grit belts, from coarse to fine, are available," says Russin.

The sharpener comes with two precision angle guides – a 50-degree guide for hunting and outdoor knives and a 40-degree model for thinner blades and kitchen knives. The unit can also be used to sharpen other common tools including scissors, axes and hatchets, mower blades, garden shears, shovels, and most any tool with a blade."

Chuck Hays, Kamloops, B.C.: "I use a broadfork every spring to cultivate our large gardens without tilling and recently purchased the **Meadow Creature** broadfork



"Pigs grow faster on sprouts than they do on corn, and also require less medication and fewer antibiotics," says Blake.

germination from 49 percent to 87 percent. It reduces mold and mildew and auto-cleans everything."

"The chambers fit my 1960's vintage drive-through corn crib. The 25-ft. long, 8 1/2-ft. wide and 10-ft. high units sit in the driveway area with a walkway to spare. The crib was designed with ingredient bins above the drive for use in a grinder mixer. I intend to use them for seed. Gravity-fed tubes will make refilling sprout trays easy and fast. Eventually I hope to renovate the crib as a giant sprouting chamber with a 6-ton a day capacity."

"I also feed sprouts to my flock of 1,000 turkeys as well as my chickens. We used to have to grind and mix every day. Now we plant and harvest every day. With fodder chambers, small operators like me can produce their own feed. We don't need the big guys with all their land or the big feed mills."

(www.meadowcreature.com). This tool is built like a tank but isn't too heavy to use. It lets me turn over and prepare the soil fast and with little effort. The tines are cut from heavy-gauge steel and welded to a stout tube crossbar. They easily penetrate the soil, and the broadfork works well to loosen and aerate the soil without mixing the layers together."

Ken Becker, Brocton, N.Y.: "I like my 2005 **Chevy** 2500 HD pickup equipped with a Duramax diesel engine and Allison transmission. It rides like a car, pulls like a tractor, and is as fuel efficient as a motorcycle."

Bob Williams, Lebam, Wash.: "I use my 2005 **Sears Craftsman** 24 hp riding mower to mow lawns for local disabled vets. I go over 5 to 6 acres every 3 weeks on land that has everything from blackberry briars to mole hills on it. In 7 years I've replaced just the battery and a belt and used 2 cans of Fix-A-Flat on the front tires. I think this mower will keep going for at least another 7 years."

Paul Steffes, Edson, Alta.: A 1997 **Dodge** 3/4-ton pickup equipped with a diesel engine rates as Paul's "best buy". "I bought this pickup used a year ago with about 300,000 miles on it and have put on about 15,000

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