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identical to the factory one at NAPA for about \$50.

"The owner's manual says to change the oil in the Hydro gear drive system at 100 hrs. However, while reading the manual I noticed the machine is nothing like what the manual shows so I called the dealer, and he said it isn't necessary to change the oil at 100 hrs. The manual shows the drain plug is located under the filter but as it turns out, the filter is the drain plug.

"Several other little things have gone wrong on this mower. For example, the clutch on the deck belt wouldn't engage. The dealer said I could take care of the problem myself by removing the wiring harness and fixing any broken connections. I refused because I didn't want to void the warranty, so they said they'd come out and pick it up but 10 days later they still hadn't done that. I finally decided to haul the mower to the dealer - an 80-mile round trip - but when I got there they said they couldn't get to it 'for a while' so I had to go home empty. Later on I had to drive another 80 miles to retrieve the machine.

"Calling the factory about all these problems did no good. They listened to everything I had to say, then said, 'Is that all?'. When I said I thought so, they just replied, 'Have a good day.'

"So much for research and good service. I'm stuck now, but I'll manage. No more Country Clippers for me."

Jim Ruen, Lanesboro, Minn.: "Chrysler hit a home run when they built my 2001 Voyager minivan. With more than 305,000 miles on the odometer, it's still running as smoothly as the day we drove it home from the dealer. It's my best buy ever.

"Herman Miller and Paul Gade, along with the other mechanics at Herman's Service, Fountain, Minn., have kept the Voyager in tip-top shape with regular oil changes, service and minimal repair (mostly brakes due to my driving style). The most expensive part replaced to date is the alternator (twice).

"Even tires last longer. Regular tire rotation at every service lets tires rated for 50,000



miles go 60,000 and more. Having mechanics you can trust is great. When the tires do wear down, I let Herman pick the replacements. I don't even ask the price or brand. I know he'll take care of me and my van.

"The old van has some rust spots and dings from my sometimes distracted driving, as well as two teenagers learning to drive. The kids are grown and gone from home, but the van still purrs. Our daughter talks about buying it from us, but it's hard to imagine letting it go. The van has taken our family from Minnesota to both coasts numerous times and dozens of trips between, not to mention near daily use close to home. It has a lot of memories packed between the doors.

"When it turned over at 200,000 miles, I said we would shoot for 300,000. Maybe we'll have to go for 400,000."

Dave Setlik, Ord, Neb.: Dave nominates his 2012 **Draco** 8-row, 36-in. cornhead as his "best buy" (www.dragotec.com; ph 888 789-2723). "The automatic self-adjusting stripper plates on this head are spring-loaded and encased in grease. The shafts are bigger

in diameter, and the stalk rollers are longer. All these features have reduced my harvest loss from 8 kernels per square foot to just 3 or 4 kernels. Also, this is the best head I've ever used on down corn. I'd buy another one when the time comes to trade, but I don't plan to do that any time soon."

Chuck Angier, Sandy Level, Va.: "Having a really old house in a constant state of renovation and a wood stove with its cleaning needs, I grew weary of changing the filter



on my old Sears Craftsman shop vac. Then I found the **Dust Deputy** cyclone dust collector (www.oneida-air.com; ph 866 387-8822). All I can say is, 'wow'. It uses centrifugal force to separate and remove more than 99 percent of the dust and debris from the air-stream before it ever reaches the vacuum's filter, eliminating clogged filters and suction loss. In fact, I was able to vacuum 3 gal. of ash out of my wood stove with no significant buildup on the filter and nothing coming out of the exhaust.

"I like **Gunk** engine degreaser (www.gunk.com). Because it's water soluble, I can use it for lots of off label applications such as getting rid of bugs and resin on windshields, and final cleaning of paint brushes and hand cleaner."

Kelly Best, Tampa, Fla.: "My **Harbor Freight** mini-tire changer makes it easy to change small tires on lawn tractors, wheelbarrows, and so forth."

David Prause, China Spring, Texas: "My 2002 **Ford F-350** pickup equipped with a 7.3-liter diesel engine has about 112,000 miles on it. It gets 12 mpg loaded and 16 to 17 mpg empty. The radio has good sound quality and the air conditioner works good. I change the oil on this vehicle every 5,000 miles or so. I had to replace a rear driveshaft seal, but otherwise this pickup has required only routine maintenance."

On the "worst buy" side, "My 2015 **Kawasaki** 4010 utility vehicle is smaller than my previous 1999 Kawasaki model. I paid about \$11,000 and bought it because I had good luck with the older model and because it came with a 3-year warranty, whereas most manufacturers provide just a 6-mo. warranty. According to the warranty, at 75 hrs. I was supposed to bring the vehicle in to have the valves adjusted. However, I was surprised to find this job was going to cost me \$80, and if I didn't have the work done the warranty would be void. What kind of warranty is that?"

"Another problem was that the radiator hose came off due to an improperly installed hose clamp, which allowed air to get into the cooling system. Unfortunately, the water pump is located above the radiator so the vehicle's front end has to be jacked up 2 ft. off the floor in order to get air out of the cooling system. They wanted to charge me for that repair, too.

"Whenever I need new parts, such as bearings for cutters and plows, I order them from **Shoup Mfg.** (ph 800 627-6137; www.shoupparts.com). They can save you a lot of money. For example, I was able to buy a starter for an old Deere tractor for \$160

He Likes His "Foody" Vertical Garden Towers

Gerald Wasylyshen, Lacombe, Alberta: "I like the two Foody Vertical Garden Towers I bought from **Foody Vertical Gardens, LLC** (www.foodyverticalgardens.com; ph 855 983-6639). It's a patio or balcony gardening system with stackable growing pods, and is capable of growing up to 40 plants on a 2-ft. square footprint. The 12-in. dia. pods have 8 growing pockets and stack together on top of a base reservoir that measures 19 in. dia. The company's standard system has stackable growing pods that are filled with potting soil and are hand watered. Their hydroponic system includes an internal water pump. You can plant seeds directly or use plant starts, depending on the system you use.

"We bought our system 1 1/2 years ago and have used it to grow vegetables such as cilantro, bokchoi, spinach, lettuce, green peppers, cherry tomatoes, and basil. Plants do really well and the towers look beautiful. It's nice to have fresh food available all the time," says Wasylyshen.

"We set up both towers in our basement, which has southern exposure but isn't lived in so we can keep it cool. Each tower is about 5 ft. tall and has 4 pods on it. We put up a small 3 by 6-ft. greenhouse, next to the basement windows that's equipped with a thermostatically controlled heater. The windows don't let the full sunshine in, so we added grow lights over each tower.

"The first year we used a recirculating hydroponic system, which uses a submersible pump to pump water from the base reservoir through a hose that runs up a center shaft to the top pod. The water comes out the edges and then automatically



Gerald Wasylyshen uses his **Foody Vertical Garden Towers** to grow vegetables in his basement. "Plants do really well and the towers look beautiful," he says.

percolates down to all the other pods below it.

"However, we found that occasionally if we weren't careful the hose at the top didn't get fitted exactly right and sprayed water out onto the floor. We didn't want any water damage so the next year we filled the pods and reservoir with soil, which I prefer anyway because I think growing plants in soil results in better quality produce.

"I've tried several other vertical tower garden systems in the past, but I like this one best. The tower rotates on hard plastic bearings so by giving the tower a quarter turn every so often my plants get an even distribution of light. Also, being able to rotate the tower makes harvest an easier job."

whereas Deere charges \$400 for the same part."

Duane O. Hansen, Sheridan, Mich.: "My 2013 **Cub Cadet** 42-in. riding mower worked great at first. However, it now has constant drive belt problems and can't make it up small grades. My Sears Craftsman and Toro riding mowers never had these problems. This mower is poorly designed. The company needs their engineers to test drive their mowers, not just design them."

Francis Deters, Seneca, Kan.: "I have problems greasing zerks on IH 66, 86, and 88 series tractors equipped with wide front ends. They're painted black which makes them hard to see. I installed 1 1/2-in. extensions on the zerks, which helps some.

"The beds on modern pickups are too high. A 6-ft. tall person can't even reach over to the center of the bed to get stuff out. The beds don't have to be that tall."

Leonard Seltzer, Manhattan, Ill.: "I like my 2015 **Sears Craftsman** 3/8-in., 19.2-volt cordless impact driver. I use it with a variety of sockets, nut drivers and screwdrivers. I bought it with a 3/8-in. drill and flashlight that use the same battery pack. I paid only about \$100. It's not meant for real heavy duty work, but it's handy for in-between jobs. It's relatively lightweight and works fast."

Andy Jonassen, Athens, Wis.: "A fuel pump fitting broke off on one of my vehicles. It's a hard-to-find part so I used **Q-Bond** bonding adhesive by K Tool International to glue it back on (www.ktoolinternational.com; ph 800 762-6002). This adhesive is ultra strong, and can be used to repair almost anything."

Jim Kearney, Stevensville, Mont.: "I bought a **Bestop, Inc.** top for my 1978 CTS Jeep from J.C. Whitney (www.bestop.com;

ph 800 845-3567). The rear window had a tear in it so I called J.C. Whitney, but they said the top wasn't covered by the warranty. Then I wrote to Bestop. They were great to deal with, and within 5 days I had a new window."

Leon Laxton, Mustang, Okla.: "The 1980's **Deere** 2240 tractor I bought used had a lot of problems including with the

"Finally the engine gave out so I sold the tractor for junk."

transmission, brakes, hydraulics, water pump, fuel pump, and engine. In fact, every time I turned around something seemed to be going wrong. Finally the engine gave out so I sold the tractor for junk. I'll never buy another Deere again."

Alvin Imhoff, Argos, Ind.: "Our beef cows are very hard on water tanks, and we don't like to spend money for a new tank just because of a tiny leak. Instead, we put boards inside and outside the tank and screw them together, then spray on **Flex Seal** (www.flexsealproducts.com; ph 800 313-8772). It seals everything up. It's available as either a liquid rubber sealant or an aerosol spray. A wonderful product."

James L. Nickles, Smithville, Ohio: "In 1966 I bought a new **Wheel Horse** 1276 garden tractor equipped with a Kohler engine and automatic transmission. The transmission was designed by aerospace engineers, and I haven't had a problem with it in 49 years. A rod on the engine broke back in the 1970's, but otherwise this tractor has required only