

800 887-5030). After more than 60,000 miles with no problems, I think it's still just getting broken in. I use it to pull 24-ft. livestock trailers and hay trailers. It pulls a fully-loaded trailer like it was empty.

"My 2003 **Sears Craftsman** 22 hp garden tractor is always breaking down. The mower deck bearings keep going out, and the deck plugs up with grass. I'll never buy another Craftsman garden tractor."

Wayne Whittaker, Horton, Mich.: Wayne likes his **Husqvarna** 335 XPT chain saw, a professional model equipped with a 14-in. bar. "This compact, light saw starts easy and cuts faster than any other saw I've ever used. I can use it all day without getting too tired. It works perfect for keeping fence rows cut back. It replaced both a small and a medium sized saw that I had been using in the past."

Terry Charles, Mt. Carroll, Ill.: Terry's impressed with front fenders for tractors made by **M.D. Products** (Humboldt, Iowa; ph 515 332-3550). "These fenders are designed for chore tractors and work great during the rainy season. They keep the tractor clean, the driver stays dry, and if the tractor has a cab the windshield remains free of salt and road debris. These fenders are made tough, and the company is great to work with."

"My 2002 **Polaris** 325 Magnum 4-wheeler is my worst buy. The Mossy Oak finish flaked off, and the air box connected to the carburetor was made wrong for where it's installed, which causes the machine to function improperly on damp days. The company wouldn't fix it even though the machine was still under warranty. They knew about the problem because they changed the design on their new machines, but they wouldn't fix the machines that were already sold even though they were still under warranty."

Kevin Dibble, Smethport, Penn.: "My 1996 **Deutz** GP 250 round baler has been relatively trouble-free and is virtually impossible to plug up. It makes a firm bale in either wet or dry hay, no matter what ground speed it's working at."

"My worst buy is a 2000 commercial hot water heater made by **Rheem Mfg. Co.** The tank had to be professionally installed in order for the warranty to be valid. The tank was delivered and installed with the wrong regulator so the water wouldn't get hot enough to meet dairy regulations. It took three tries before the company finally sent me the right regulator. Then I found out they wouldn't last. Three regulators have gone bad, and the warranty had just expired on all of them. I paid \$1,800 for the tank, and the regulators cost more than \$200 apiece, including installation."

Al Kuck, Smithfield, Neb.: "My 1996 **Gehl** 3510 skid steer loader is my best buy. It's just like having another right hand for doing pivot irrigation work, moving snow, pulling posts, and so on."

"My 1994 **Dodge** 1500 4-WD pickup equipped with a 360 cu. in. engine has more than 154,000 miles on it. All I've had to replace is the fuel pump and the water pump."

"My **Ryobi** weed trimmer, which I bought at Wal-Mart, is my worst buy. It wouldn't start so I took it to Wal-Mart's service people. They got it started once. After arguing with them for four months they finally refunded my money. Since then I've purchased an **Echo** weed trimmer, which works great."

Winston D. Rhodes, Sr., Weyers Cave, Va.: "My 2001 **Chevrolet** 3500 heavy duty 4-WD dually pickup equipped with a diesel engine and an Allison automatic transmission is my best buy. This pickup is quiet and has a lot of power. I use it to pull a 30-ft. trailer with heavy loads of 25,000 to 30,000 lbs." He rates **Dodge** trucks as his "worst buys."

"We're in the fertilizer business and have a total of nine pickups ranging from 1/2-ton to 1-ton models. They're used to spray and deliver and service our accounts. In the past we always bought only Dodge pickups. Then we decided to try a GM model, and it convinced us to convert our entire fleet to Chevy and GM gas and diesel-powered pickups. By doing so, we were able to lower our operating costs by about one third. We didn't compare just one pickup - we compared nine pickups. We plan to stay with GM from now on."

Dan and Tim Thissell, Centerville, S. Dak.: They like their 2002 **REM** 2100 "corn and soybean special" grain vac. "This grain vac is relatively inexpensive to buy and is simple to repair. It's very user friendly, with no expensive air pumps or air locks on it. It uses an auger to fill our truck and will load it at a rate of 90 bushels per minute under the best conditions. I think you can buy a new fan for about \$500, so you don't have to worry about the possibility of a catastrophic breakdown."

Rosalind Baker, Dunnelion, Fla.: "I nominate the **Flowbee** hair cutting system as my best buy (www.flowbee.com; ph 361 939-9908). It's an easy way to cut your own hair."

You attach the cutter to your vacuum cleaner, choose the spacer you want, and the hair is drawn up into the cutter by the vacuum. It results in a precision hair cut, and the vacuum takes care of all the mess. Even on my first attempt I got a good cut. It cost \$70 but quickly paid for itself.



"I like **Greased Lightning** spray spot remover (**A&M Cleaning Products, Inc.**, P.O. Box 1731, Clemson, S.C. 29633 ph 864 646-7730; website: www.greased-lightning.com). It gets greasy mechanics pants almost clean enough to wear to church."

Tom McCracken, Vanderbilt, Penn.: Tom's happy with his 2000 **Deere** 4 by 2 Gator. "My wife and son bought our Gator over my objections. Boy, was I wrong. We all love it. We use it for everything - feeding livestock, fencing work, checking cattle and hogs, and so on. All of us, including our sheep dog Duke, love taking it on Sunday afternoon rides."

Richard Rossmiller, Liberty, Ill.: "My **Cub Cadet** 394 front tine tiller starts easy, usually on the first pull. It runs quiet, and the adjustable handles make it easier for either a tall or short person to operate and to maneuver between garden plants. It's a great machine."

Larry Ingram, Lincoln, Ill.: A 2002 **Kubota** L4300 tractor equipped with a front-end loader heads up Larry's "best buy" list. "It's handy for doing garden and farm work, and I like being able to hang deer from the loader during hunting season. I get a lot of things done with it that I never thought I could do."

Russ Kowtun, St. Paul, Alberta: "I like my 1988 **Honda** 350 4-WD ATV. It performs great and, after 15 years I haven't spent even one penny on repairs. If you can find one, buy it."

Billy C. Nance, Cedar Hill, Tenn.: A 2003 **Dodge** Ram 1500 Quad Cab pickup equipped with a 4.7-liter, V-8 engine is Billy's "best buy." "This pickup has great room and a lot of power. It has no problem pulling trailers with heavy loads."

"On the other hand, my 2001 **Dodge** Ram 1500 Quad Cab pickup with a 318 cu. in., V-

Why I Like My Austrees

By Mark Newhall, Editor & Publisher

I live on a half-acre lot in suburban Minneapolis. Our property backs onto a park so it feels like we have more room than we do. Even so, my nearest neighbor's deck is just a stone's throw away from ours.

To create a barrier between decks, three years ago I ordered some Austrees - fast-growing hybrid poplars that originated in New Zealand. **FARM SHOW** first wrote about Austrees some 20 years ago when they were developed. A Colorado company, Rocky Mountain Austrees, now sells them in North America.

Austrees are said to grow 10 to 15 ft. the first year and that much or more in subsequent years, reaching their full height of 50 to 70 ft., depending on soil and water conditions. You can let them go or trim them into a hedge, which is what I wanted to do.

I planted four 2-ft. Austrees between my deck and the neighbor's. I followed instructions and watered the young trees heavily for the first couple weeks, keeping them soaked. I also put the company's fertilizer tablet into the holes with the trees to give them a fast start.

The four trees took off like crazy. Five months later, at the end of the summer, they were about 25 ft. tall and I had to start cutting them off at the top. The next year they resumed their fantastic rate of growth and I cut at least 30 ft. off the top of the trees to keep them at "hedge" level.

Then last winter, I cut off nearly all the branches, leaving only the thickening trunks. This spring, the trees burst out all over like Chia pets, filling in more thickly than ever and giving us the privacy screen we wanted.

I should point out that these are "messy" trees. They have a lot of small leaves that drop late in the fall. They also have a very aggressive root system so they shouldn't be planted near tile lines or basement foundations.

Another note of caution: If you don't plan to water and fertilize these trees during the first year or so, don't even bother planting them. I planted a number of other Austrees at the back of my lot and just left them there without any attention. Three years later, those trees are only about 4 to 5 ft. tall and don't look good.

One other note: Rocky Mountain Austrees, sells a couple of other fast-growing varieties which I tried. The Golden Pannier is a gold-leaved hybrid that's designed to be a shade tree, with bigger leaves and spreading branches. The three trees that



Three-year-old Austrees form a dense privacy barrier. Trees were 25 ft. tall after 5 months but have been "topped" to keep them at hedge height.



Fast-growing Merlot Poplar, center, has an attractive reddish tint to leaves. They grow as fast as Austrees.

I planted looked good briefly in the spring but the leaves turned black as the summer went on. They were sickly and I cut them down after a year.

Another variety, the fast-growing Merlot Poplar, grows more upright, more like the Austrees. The leaves have an attractive reddish tint to them and they grow as fast as the Austrees. I'm only on my second growing season with these trees but they look good and might actually might make a more attractive windbreak than the Austrees.

Contact: **FARM SHOW Followup**, Rocky Mountain Austrees, P.O. Box 9307, Colorado Springs, Colo. 80932 (ph 719 635-9380; website www.rmausa.com).

8 engine was a worst buy. It went through three engine replacements in only 500 miles. The door and rear window seals leaked. The pickup wouldn't go faster than 65 mph, and

"This pickup went through three engines in only 500 miles."

whenever I went between 35 and 45 mph the entire pickup would shudder. Another problem is that the automatic transmission shifts hard when going uphill with the cruise control on."

Paul A. Krumenauer, Chippewa Falls, Wis.: A 1999 **Kawasaki** Prairie 300 4-WD ATV rates as Paul's "best buy." "This ma-

chine has been used and abused, but it can handle it. I use it to plow snow on my 600-ft. driveway. It works much faster than my tractor, and it has good traction on ice. I've used this machine successfully to pull logs and loads weighing as much as 10 times the machine's own weight."

Ralph Farnsworth, New Haven, Vt.: "One of my best buys ever is a used 1992 **Nissan** 4-WD pickup equipped with a 5-speed transmission and an electric lift snow plow. It has about 142,000 miles on it with very few problems. The tires on it last about 60,000 miles, and it doesn't use oil. I change the oil every 2,000 miles. This pickup is fuel efficient, always starts, and has a lot of power."

(Continued on next page)