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chine, but the brush blades are expensive and don't stay sharp for long. I had a stack of left-over carbide Skil saw blades laying around after building my new house, so I decided to adapt one to the trimmer. I used some washers to reduce the spindle hole and to space the backing plate. The blades cut through weeds, brush and saplings up to about 3 to 4 in. in diameter. I've been told this idea is not recommended, although I've used these blades for about two years without any problems. I always wear a face shield and gloves when doing trimming work. As with any rotating blade or chain, one must use caution and be heads up at all times."

Harlan Haisley, Fairmount, Ind.: Harlan likes the **MacDon 972** 36-ft. head he uses on his International 2388 combine. "This header feeds so evenly that I can drive one or two miles per hour faster than I could with my old 30-ft. head."

Mike Eilbes, Theresa, Wis.: A 1994 **Dodge Ram 1500** 2-WD longbed pickup equipped with a 318 cu. in. engine and an automatic transmission rates as Mike's "best buy". I bought this pickup used in 1998 and put on about 236,000 miles before any major transmission maintenance was required. We have a roofing and home repair business and I use this pickup mainly to pull trailers. It now has more than 250,000 miles on it but is still going strong.

"My 2000 **Dodge Dakota** 2-WD pickup equipped with a 4.7-liter engine and automatic transmission is my worst buy. I bought it used with about 38,000 miles. I had to replace the rear end at about 45,000 miles, at 49,000 miles, and again at 88,000 miles. It has also gone through three sets of ball joints, a water pump, and it needed new front calipers at 39,000 miles. It's a good thing I bought the extended warranty. Last April I replaced it with a 2005 **Dodge Ram 1500** 2-WD longbed pickup, which has about 15,000 trouble-free miles on it.

"I love my 2004 **Toro** snow thrower. It'll go right through 1 1/2 ft. deep slush on our driveway with just a little grunting. It has only a 4 hp, 2-cycle engine but seems to have the power of a bigger machine."

William G. Rawls, Currie, N.C.: "My **Stihl** weed cutter equipped with a saw tooth head is the most trouble-free tool I've ever bought. I use it under extreme conditions."

Robert Szabo, West Land, Mich.: "I bought a new **Volkswagen** Corrada sports car used with about 49,000 miles. It has needed about \$4,000 worth of work even though I have babied it. I sold it to a mechanic at the dealership for about one third its value and walked away. I'll never buy a Volkswagen again."

David Taylor, Cynthia, Ky.: David's pleased with his 1991 **Taarup** 206 disc mower. "I've used this machine to mow a couple hundred acres each year ever since I bought it. Five years ago I decided to buy another disc mower because I was sure the Taarup model wouldn't last much longer. However, I'm still using this machine every year. It pulls easier than the newer machine, which is sitting in the barn. The only problem is that I can't find a Taarup dealer. If someone knows of a dealer please let me know."

Roger Mayberry, Columbus Grove, Ohio: "My 1996 **Dodge** 250 pickup has more than 284,000 miles on it but the engine has never been touched. The transmission was rebuilt last year."

Ray Luke, Preston, Miss.: "It has performed well with few problems," reports Ray, pleased with his 1995 **Kioto** 3054 4-WD tractor equipped with a **Woods** front-end loader. "It handles a 5-ft. rotary cutter with no prob-

lems. I like the 4-WD feature.

"My **Weed Eater** trimmer is my worst buy. I've owned two Weed Eaters and both were hard to start. I ended up giving them away. Now I own a **Stihl** weed trimmer and am happy with it."

Jim and Nancy Solberg, Carnation, Wash.: "Our **Mantis** electric-operated rototiller is our best buy," says Nancy. "It does everything the advertisements say it will do and has a lot of power, with 2-speed operation. My husband loves it. Now he doesn't have to rototill my flower beds or garden any more because the Mantis is so easy to handle that it's no problem for me to operate."

Jim Wagner, Farmington, N.Y.: "This machine is a real time saver," says Jim, pleased with his 2004 **Kubota** ZD21 zero turn 60-in. diesel commercial mower. "I had been using a conventional garden tractor but this mower has reduced my mowing time by half. It's built super tough and is extremely reliable. It's versatile enough that I can use it to cut our yard, around orchard trees, and even in pastures. I really like it."

Glenn Fisher, Homer, Ga.: "My 1953 **Farmall** Super C tractor is my best buy ever. I use it on a weekly basis. It still has the original rear tires."

Jay Nevenhoven, Baileyville, Ill.: "My 2002 **Kubota** BX 2200 tractor equipped with a front-end loader, mower deck, and scraper blade is my best buy. It does everything I want it to do."

Haskell W. Carr, Twin Falls, Idaho: "I like my 2003 **Arctic Cat** 300 4-WD ATV. It has a super low range that is really handy when I use the machine to pull my 15-gal. sprayer. This model rides and handles better than our other 1991 ATV. However, I wish it had a cruise control so I could keep a steady speed for spraying."

On the "worst buy" side, "The power steering failed on our 2002 **Buick** LeSabre with only about 33,000 miles on it, but the 36-

"I wish it had a cruise control so I could keep a steady speed for spraying."

month warranty had expired three months earlier and the company wouldn't honor it. I had to pay \$700 out of my pocket."

Keith Riggin, Pulaski, Tenn.: "My **Echo** power tools are my best buys. I have two chain saws, three string trimmers, a backpack blower, and a small tiller. Every one of them will start within two to three pulls, and they never fail to work. I've used one of the string trimmers for six years. One time I accidentally dropped it in a creek where it became completely submerged under water. But after I poured out the gas and dried the spark plug, it fired right up."

"My **Cub Cadet** Big Country utility vehicle is my worst buy. It has a vacuum-operated, push button transmission. The problem is that every time I load the bed with firewood or fence posts, the switch hangs between forward and reverse so that the engine won't start. Then I have to unload everything and raise the bed so that I can manually get to the switch. Last winter when the temperature dropped to 20 degrees the buttons froze up and I couldn't go anywhere. The engine would start, but I couldn't put the vehicle in gear."

"I called the company and they told me to keep the vehicle stored in a heated building so that it wouldn't 'freeze up.'"

J.D. Provence, Denver City, Texas: "Whether I'm working on machinery, per-

He Inherited "Best Buy" Soil Probe

When Paul Overby, Wolford, N. Dak., took over his father's farm, he inherited a soil probe his father made years ago from plans published by North Dakota State University Extension.

One change Overby made was to move the 3-pt. mounted probe to the side of an IH 1066 tractor.

The tractor's hydraulics power the probe, which has a cylinder with a 2-ft. stroke fastened to a piece of channel iron. A bracket fastens it to the frame high enough so that when the probe comes out, it has a 2-ft. long sample.

"The probe is made out of a 2-ft. long piece of 1-in. dia. steel pipe. Its tip was made by heating one end and shaping the pipe into a 'cone' and then heat-treated to harden the edges," Overby says. A short steel shaft welds to a block of steel pinned to the clevis at the end of the cylinder piston. The probe fits into the shaft to take a sample.

Dipping the probe's tip into oil helps remove the soil and doesn't contaminate the sample.

If he had to make another one, Overby says he would make the cylinder longer so the probe could clear the land by a few inches.

NDSU agricultural engineer Vern Hofman says he still has free plans for a soil probe he designed in Feb. 1988. Hofman says that probes made from his plans are also avail-



After he inherited a 3-pt. mounted soil probe his father made years ago, Paul Overby moved it to the side of an IH 1066 tractor

able from Horvick Manufacturing (www.horvick.com, ph 800 373-4084 or 701 280-2862).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul Overby, Lee Farms, HC1 Box 25, Wolford, N. Dak. 58385 (ph 701 656-3654; email: lffpc@utma.com).

sonal vehicles, or tiny electronic gizmos, one of the most important items in my toolbox is penetrating oil. There are dozens of brands on the market, and everyone has their favorite. I was a faithful user of WD-40 for about 25 years. But about a year ago I received a special offer on a lubricant that I had never heard of before. It's called **Ballistol Lube** (ph 800 253-2460; www.ballistol.com). It's available both in aerosol and bulk liquid form. This product blew the doors off all the others I've tried over the years.

"Ballistol lubricates, penetrates, cleans, protects, and preserves woods, metals, leather, plastics, rubber, and even can be used on house plants. It contains no carcinogens, is 100 percent biodegradable, and comes with a money back guarantee. I had a door on my new home that wouldn't close without turning the knob. For some reason, friction between the frame and the latch just wouldn't let it close no matter how hard I tried. I put a tiny droplet on the latch, and right away I was able to close the door with no problem. That was more than a year ago, and the door still closes perfectly without having to turn the knob.

"Another time I bought a 20-year-old fiberglass speed boat that had been stored in a dusty West Texas airplane hangar for about 15 years. Oxidation had turned this black and red boat into a dull gray and pink eyesore. Using a can of Ballistol and a red rag, in only about an hour I had this 20-ft. boat looking like it had just come off the showroom floor. Now I always carry a can in my van, jeep, truck and boat. I use about a can of penetrating oil every month. I haven't used anything else since I discovered this product."

Mark S. Yax, Solon, Ohio: "I'm happy with my 2004 **Polaris** Ranger 4-WD ATV. I use it during the summer on vacation and at a campground, where it makes a great golf cart. The 3-person front bench seat really comes in handy. I also added some jump seats from a Cadillac limousine that mount to the bed with a special bracket that I welded up.

"During the fall this machine becomes my firewood hauler and yard cleanup work horse. The plow attachment really takes care of the

snow. I bought an extra set of wheel rims on which I mounted some **Greensaver** turf tires (Gateway Tire and Wheel, 120 Industrial Drive, Litchfield, Ill. ph 888 488-9280 or 217 324-0788). They allow me to drive on the lawn without tearing it up, and they also smooth out the ride on gravel campground roads. They also help save the mud/snow tires that came with the Ranger.

"The only problem I've had so far with this vehicle happened recently when the gearshift stuck in neutral. I managed to free it but I'll probably return it to the dealer for service. Also, I can't figure out why **Polaris** doesn't include an oil pressure gauge on this machine. I bought an aftermarket gauge to install but was unable to remove the 1/8 NPG pipe plug, which was installed with some permanent Locktite. It bothers me not to know what the oil pressure is."

Paul and Lisa Meyer, Sheldon, Mo.: Lisa says **Herrick Kimball's** book "Anyone Can Build A Tub-Style Mechanical Chicken Plucker" is their "best buy". "It's available at Amazon.com or from Cumberland Books (www.cumberlandbooks.com; ph 877 244-5184). We wouldn't be in the pastured poultry business if my husband Paul hadn't built this plucker after reading the book. Turn the plucker on and in less than 20 seconds, three chickens will be naked. We love it."

Larry Brandon, Caseyville, Ill.: Larry says his "best buy" is his 2000 **Echo** leaf blower. "I've used this thing hard for five years, but it still starts easy and runs great.

"My 2002 **Dixie** chopper mower is my worst buy. I can't get this mower to cut good because the deck is impossible to set level. I still use this machine, but only when the cut doesn't have to be perfect."

Gerald Robson, Madison, Wis.: "I've used a **Little Giant** ladder since 1979 and have always considered it a best buy. I recently bought a new fiberglass **Little Giant** to use in my electrical work. I can carry it on the roof rack of my mini van but it'll reach the eaves of a 2-story building."

Larry Seider, Appleton City, Mo.: "This is the first rotary combine I've ever owned and I really like it," says Larry, pleased with