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6-cyl. engine and 4-speed transmission with overdrive. No problems."

**Jane and Allen Franks, Guthrie, Ky.:** "Our 2007 **Grasshopper** 620 zero turn riding mower equipped with a 48-in. deck is highly maneuverable and has required little maintenance. We've used it to mow a lot of grass over the years but it's still going strong. It's on its third set of blades."

**Ron Schnitzler, Sparta, Wis.:** "My **HP** laser jet printer works fast, produces clean copy, and has had no problems."

**Jason Gogerty, Hubbard, Iowa:** When rabbits thinned his stand of Austrees, Jason filled in the gaps by planting young trees in



plastic protective **Blue-X** grow tubes (ph 888 472-5839; www.growtube.com). He assembles the grow tubes by inserting a roll of plastic inside a roll of poly film. The seedling is inserted into the top of the tube and then a small amount of dirt is mounded around the base. A stake holds the tube in place.

**R.C. Groh, Kamiah, Idaho:** He's the satisfied owner of a 2001 **Deere** 4300 hydrostatic drive tractor equipped with a **Deere** 430 front-end loader. "This tractor always starts right up, is easy to operate, and doesn't use any oil. It's also easy on fuel."

**Arnold Johnson, Crosby, Minn.:** "I like my 2012 **Smith & Wesson** M&P 22-caliber semi automatic pistol (www.smith-wesson.com). It's lightweight, fits nicely in my hand, and is relatively inexpensive to shoot. Works great for home and self protection."

**Kelly S. Myers, Brookline, Mo.:** Kelly's the owner of a 2005 **Ford** F-150 pickup equipped with a Tritan 4.6-liter, V-8 engine



and automatic transmission. "It has about 155,000 miles on it and has required only routine maintenance. I use it to haul my antique tractors on a trailer and to pull a dump trailer. It'll pull 8,000 to 12,000-lb. loads with no problems. This is a great pickup."

**Todd Van Lehn, Van Lehn Construction Services, LLC, Xenia, Ohio:** Todd owns 5 **Takeuchi** excavators (ph 706 693-3600; www.takeuchi-us.com). "They're built strong and have been repair-free."

"I like the **Nupla Tools** spade shovels I bought at Grainger's (www.grainger.com). These shovels are almost impossible to break."

"**Milwaukee** power tools are really dependable."

**Fred Diedrich, Pepin, Wis.:** "My 2010 **MTD** 21-in. push-type lawn mower runs

great. However, the tenth time I tried to start it the recoil broke. It wasn't covered by the warranty and I was charged \$95 for a new recoil, which was plenty high since I paid just \$170 for the mower."

**Gary Leatherman, Lincolntown, N.C.:** "I like **Danner Pronghorn** work boots (ph 877 432-6637; www.danner.com). My son and I have bought several different styles over the years, and all were completely waterproof. One pair had a problem with padding bunching up inside the boots. I called the company and they told me to send the boots back. I did, and 11 days later they sent me a new pair of boots at no charge. Fantastic."

On the negative side, he lists his 2005 **Polaris** 700 Sportsman 4-WD 4-wheeler. "When this machine was new the 4-WD would engage even though I didn't activate the switch. The dealer fixed it, but the same problem happened again. Then water started getting into the oil. I fixed that problem, but now it's happening again."

**Michael A. Smith, Elkton, Md.:** Michael's impressed with his **Ryobi** 18-volt, 1/2-in. impact wrench. "When I bought this tool I had had no idea how handy and strong it would be. It's supposed to produce 200 ft. lbs. of torque, and it does. In fact, we had tightened some 7/8-in. track bolts at up to 210 ft. lbs. of torque but it backed them right off. It's lightweight, and the Lithium-ion batteries last a long time."

**Mike Hastetter, New Oxford, Penn.:** Mike's the satisfied owner of a **Walker** MT GHS riding mower equipped with a 26 hp EFI engine. "These mowers have a built-in grass catcher which makes them very compact. The engine is fuel efficient and uses 1/4 to 1/3 less fuel per hour than a comparable carbureted engine."

**Howard Gabel, Lebanon, Oregon:** Howard's impressed with his 2002 **Mahindra** 2015 4-WD diesel tractor equipped with a front-end loader and backhoe. "This little tractor is amazing. It uses very little fuel and can go up a grade so steep that it's actually dangerous. The backhoe's frame fastens under the tractor to avoid damaging the 3-pt. hitch."

**J.D. Greene, Bainbridge, Ga.:** "I like the fuel economy on my 2012 **Case IH** Magnum 210 tractor, and the quietness and quality of the cab. This tractor has a lot of power and shifts smooth. It has many small improvements over my Magnum 245 and 215 models, which are also good tractors. We use Diesel Exhaust Fluid urea additive with this tractor which definitely improves the fuel economy."

On the minus side, he lists his **Sears** geared ratchet wrenches. "After limited use the ratchet box end on the wrenches began to strip out. I expected the company to exchange my wrenches at the store for new ones, but instead was told I'd have to send the wrenches back to the company. Now I buy my wrenches from **Snap-On** or **Case IH**."

**LeRoy Fifer, Sullivan, Ill.:** "I like my **Master Lock** magnetic backup camera. It helps me see better when hooking up to a trailer (ph 800 464-2088; www.masterlock.com). The camera plugs into a 4-prong plug-in and comes with a viewing screen that plugs into my pickup's cigarette lighter. The camera itself is magnetized to attach to the tailgate and provides a constant view of the hitch ball. I can back right up to a trailer, without having to get out 3 or 4 times just to see how close I am to the coupler."

**Arthur Talmage, Bridgeport, Texas:** "It's a good truck," says Arthur about his 2012 **Ford** F-250 pickup equipped with a diesel engine. "The engine is quiet and runs smooth. This pickup looks and rides good, has good



Stevens removed the cargo box from an Isuzu truck and fitted the frame with a flatbed off a 1-ton Chevy.

## Rebuilt Isuzu Makes Great Farm Truck

When Chuck Stevens needed a new farm truck, he found an inexpensive used Isuzu cargo truck and rebuilt it into a handy flatbed.

"I looked at Ford and Chevy 1-ton and 1 1/2-ton trucks, but the prices were hard to justify," says Stevens. "I spent time at online truck forums and noticed that Australians talk a lot about the reliability and fuel economy of Isuzus. The engines use a premium block and are designed for 500,000 miles."

He found a 2001 Isuzu 1 1/2-ton, 14-ft. box truck on Craigslist for \$6,000. It had 1,200 hrs. on it and 290,000 miles. Stevens estimates the re-do added about \$3,000 to the initial cost, much of that being sandblasting and a new paint job.

"My dad Lester and I pulled the box off and installed an 8-ft. flatbed from a 1978 1-ton Chevy," says Stevens, noting that the old truck box was converted into a small storage shed. "The Isuzu frame is only 3/8-in. narrower than Ford and Chevy trucks were before they moved the fuel tank inside the frame rail. We drilled new mounting holes on the frame and ran three 2 by 1/4-in. plates down each side for brackets. We extended it 4 ft. to the front and added a

headache rack."

To accommodate towing, Stevens and his dad mounted a drawbar with a 2-in. receiver hitch and installed wiring for electric brakes.

"The Isuzu comes with a full-size industrial battery, tilt cab and exterior transmission filter and drain for easy maintenance," says Stevens. "It also has a built-in exhaust brake. The rotor was worn, but the bearings still had factory-installed grease. We just cleaned and repacked them and put it back to work."

Stevens uses the truck for hauling big round bales and other cargo, as well as transporting his farrier equipment to jobs.

The Isuzu has proven to be a good truck. The 16-in. tires on it qualify it as a pickup for insurance purposes. The short wheelbase with beam axle front end (under the cab) makes for a tight turning radius.

"With a full tank of gas and all my tools, it is still under 4,000 lbs.," says Stevens. "It's really fuel efficient, giving me 23 mpg the last time I checked."

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brakes, and a good air conditioner. I don't like the short 6-ft. 6-in. bed, but I do like the short wheelbase."

**William Degenhardt, Franklin, N.Y.:** "I'm not impressed with my **Cub Cadet** 7254 garden tractor equipped with a Kawasaki 2-cyl. gas engine. The engine won't start whenever the temperature drops below 78 degrees, and the automatic transmission doesn't work good, either."

**Martin Masar, Montrose, Penn.:** "In my opinion **Fiskars** cutting tools are the best on the market (ph 866 348-5661; www2.fiskars.com). I'm a big man, but their scissors fit my hand as if they were custom made. I use them to cut branches, to give my dog a haircut, and to cut all kinds of paper as well as leather, yet they always stay sharp. The company provides great customer service."

"I like **Skinner** gun sights made for Henry rifles (www.skinnersights.com). These rear-mounted ghost ring sights are easy to install, and work fantastic for my old eyes. They're the best."

**George Lindsay, Sr., Greenville, Tenn.:** George is well satisfied with his 2008 **Snapper** 28-in. riding mower equipped with a 12 1/2 hp engine. "It still runs like new and has required only routine maintenance. It's also fairly fuel efficient."

**Gene A. Jeffries, Montague, Mich.:** "My 2008 **Kubota** 1850 diesel garden tractor is equipped with a 42-in. deck, 3-pt. hitch and a front-end loader that's easy to put on and take off. I use a rototiller, blade, and rake on the 3-pt. hitch. I like the company's zero percent interest financing."

**Edwin Waters, Chisholm, Minn.:** Edwin nominates his 2006 **Deere** 3120 C Hydro tractor equipped with a 300X front-end loader and 375 backhoe as his "best buy." "We use this tractor to move dirt and snow, and to plant trees."

**Charles Campbell, Nacogdoches, Texas:** "My 2013 **Ridgid** 4512 10-in. table saw works perfectly. No vibration and plenty of power."

"My **Terratek** TB66 6-in. bench grinder is so weak that as soon as I touch the material to the grindstone, it slows down. This tool literally has no power."

**Raymond C. Pike, Geneva, Ohio:** "Our 1982 **Kubota** DT345 4-WD loader tractor is the best tractor we've ever had. It still runs great."

**Austin Guether, Leavenworth, Kan.:** Austin bought a used 2000 **Yazhoo/Kees** zero turn riding mower with 824 hrs. on it. "The previous owner did no maintenance on the mower. It needed a new deck spindle and had an electrical short that caused the deck clutch to go out. However, the price was reasonable and I couldn't pass it up. It spent a few days in a dealer's shop where it got a new clutch and spindle."

"I've now used this mower several times and it does an excellent job. The 17 hp Kawasaki V-twin engine sips fuel and has plenty of power, even when cutting tall grass. Also, the deck and frame are built to last. I look forward to several more years of quality mowing time with this machine."

**Jack Caldwell, Fredericksburg, Texas:** "My 2006 **Kawasaki** Mule utility vehicle