

## Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

"I'm a handyman/mechanic and purchase tools regularly. Some of the stuff I've purchased from **Harbor Freight** is good, and some of it is junk. I like the **Chicago** electric power tools I bought from them, including a 10-in. industrial tile/brick saw. It has been left outside in the rain and snow but it's waterproof so it still works good. After one year of use, all it needed was a new \$5 drive belt.

"On the other hand, the brushes on my **Chicago** 1 3/4 hp router burned out after only one hour of use. Then, after I replaced the brushes, a switch burned out, all on the same day.

"A **Central Hydraulics** 12-ton hydraulic pipe bender, bought at Harbor Freight, works good for standard pipe but will kink if used on tubing or EMT conduit.

"My **Clear Water** 1-in. pump is a worst buy. In the first six months of operation the pump would seize after it sat for a day or so. I have to stick a knife or key in the fan to free it, then start the pump. Another problem is there's no freeze drain on the bottom of the pump housing. It does work well when it's running and it only cost \$35."

**Gordon S. Arnold, Fillmore, Ind.:** Gordon says **Can Am Supply** rust converter paint is a "great product" but that the company's marketing could be improved. "The problem was that a salesman wouldn't stop calling us. He called 50 to 60 times in three months. He called prior to delivery of the product to see if it had arrived, he called to see how we liked the product, and he continued to call us all last summer to the point of harassment. I told him never to call again and he laid off for two weeks, but then he resumed calling."

**Mike Krajcik, Perry, Ontario:** Mike says Chinese gas and diesel motors and the products powered by them are "worst buys". "With the flood of cheap Chinese mechanical products into North America, my only advice is, don't buy them. They're often copies of other patents. Nice paint and low price are alluring but whatever you buy will end up in the corner of the shed, right next to the garbage pail."

**Phil Cuff, Rio, Wis.:** "My **Heatmor** outside wood burning furnace works great. It's nice to have all the wood, and the smoky smell that it makes, outside instead of in the basement of our house."

**John A. McCoy, Delhi, La.:** "My 1997 **Jeep** Cherokee has more than 240,000 miles and the engine still runs as good as the one on my newer 2004 Grand Cherokee. Both vehicles are powered by a fuel-saving 4.0-liter engine."

**Norman Maisel, Quemado, New Mexico:** Norman likes his **American Eagle** windmill which he uses to drive a compressor to aerate ponds (ph 440 236-3278; www.pondaeration.com). "This windmill is all it's advertised to be. It's easy to assemble and set up and it looks good. It will pay for itself in two to three years in electricity savings."

**Bob Mack, Osage, Iowa:** A **FarmTek** 30 by 60-ft. hoop building rates as Bob's "best buy". "It's well built and all the parts were easy to put together. We keep our calves in it (www.farmtek.com; ph 563 875-2288)."

**John Perkins, Holland, Texas:** John has more than 402,000 miles on his 1995 **Ford** 3/4-ton van. "All I've replaced are the alter-

nator, heater core, fan belts, and radiator. This vehicle still doesn't use any oil. I change the oil every 5,000 miles. It's powered by a 6-cyl., 300 cubic inch engine and automatic transmission. I expect this van to last another 500,000 miles."

**Raymond Schoen, Pocola, Okla.:** Raymond likes his 2003 **Chevrolet** Impala. "No repairs in 80,000 miles. It gets 25 mpg."

**Jim Petty, Pryor, Okla.:** Jim's the satisfied owner of a **Chicago Pneumatic** heavy duty 1/2-in. impact wrench. "This tool is the real deal. It's simple to operate, powerful, and has variable power settings. I love using it. It can apply up to 425 lbs. of torque, yet is very compact for use in tight places."

On the negative side is an auxillary 5-gal. gas can made by **Blitz**. "It dribbles and slobbers over everything whenever I try to pour from it. The can doesn't even have a working vent on it. It shouldn't be too difficult to design a small vent like the ones on every other gas can I've ever seen. These 'inside the spout' vents are the pits."

**James Neil Butchert, Issaquah, Wash.:** "My **Troy Bilt** Pony garden tiller is the most dangerous and poorly designed machine I've ever used. It has no drag stake to limit forward motion and will jerk out of my grip and go racing across the ground until it hits something or turns over. There should be either a clutch or a throttle on the hand grip with a spring to stop the machine, so you could close the throttle or release the clutch if you lose your grip."

**Luke Doyle, Chesaw, Wash.:** "My **Porter Cable** 14.4-volt cordless drill is my best buy. It's eight years old and has been charged hundreds of times. The batteries don't last as long any more, but this drill just keeps on going."

"The air-powered brad-nailer I bought from **Harbor Freight** is my worst buy. I was able to shoot only seven or eight brads before it quit working. The store I bought it from wouldn't return it or refund my money so I threw this piece of junk away."

**Kevin McGhee, Edmond, Okla.:** "I live on eight acres where I do a lot of trimming work. My 2006 **Swisher** high-wheeled trimmer is one of the best buys I've ever made," says Kevin. "I bought it at Lowe's for less than \$300."

**Gerrit R. LaFleur, Mont Alto, Penn.:** A 1997 4-WD, 4-door **Ford** Explorer equipped with a 6-cyl. engine rates as Gerrit's "best buy". "I'm a die-hard Ford man and have never owned a bad one. This Explorer is no exception. It's fuel efficient and doesn't use any oil. The body is in great shape, it has a comfortable ride, and it'll tow a big trailer with no problems. It has more than 136,000 miles on it but still runs great."

**Ralph Mullard, Vestaburg, Mich.:** Ralph nominates his 1993 **Stihl** chainsaw equipped with a 20-in. bar as his "best buy". "I use it to cut about eight cords of wood a year. It has never refused to start, even though the spark plug has never been changed."

**Terri Cronn, Remah, New Mexico:** Terri likes his 2002 **Ryobi** 18-volt cordless drill and screwdriver. "I've used it to build two steel-sided barns. We used a 1/4-in. socket for the screws. I've done numerous other projects with it as well."

"I saved a lot of money when I purchased my 4-ton **Ryobi** log splitter. This little electric splitter works almost as well as a 24-ton gas-driven one. It's small, stores out of the way, and works all day long."

On the minus side, he lists his 2006 **Chevrolet** Equinox all-wheel-drive SUV. "During the first month of use both head gaskets had to be replaced, as well as the intake manifold. The carbon canister, which is a plastic evaporative smog box, is bolted on



Jim Ruen plowed up eight acres of corn ground pulling a Kunz chisel plow behind his Honda ATV.

### He Likes Kunz ATV-Mounted Chisel Plow

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

When I prepped an 8 1/2-acre field last fall that I intended to plant with hardwoods, my neighbors probably thought I was crazy. First I hit the stubble with an **AcrEase** 57-in. rough-cut mower from **Kunz Engineering** (www.Kunzeng.com; ph 815 539-6954) pulled by my **Honda** Foreman 4-wheeler. It chewed up the stalks and cleaned up the field edges, too. In fact, it chewed up anything it could climb over, including 3-in. saplings if I hit them hard enough to bend them over. It is built rugged. A couple of times the **Honda** was stopped in its tracks, but the heavy frame on the mower was untouched.

The next step was the one that really had the neighbors scratching their heads. I pulled into the field with the **Kunz** Till-Ease, a 43-in. chisel plow, mounted behind my trusty **Honda**. I keep a **Groundhog** loader on the 4-wheeler all year, so I knew weight and traction would be no problem. Power was more of a question, but proved to be no problem either. The **Honda**'s 500 cc engine and continuously variable transmission gave me more than enough power.

Since I didn't need a terribly smooth field, two of the five sweeps were removed. I also wanted to avoid trash buildup, and even with the cutting coulters in front of the sweeps, heavy corn residue might've been a problem.

I hit the field at an angle with the chisel



Ruen says **Kunz Engineering's** 57-in. mower handles tall brush easily.

plow at about 4 to 6 in. deep and traveling at 6 to 8 mph. It was like riding a wild mustang. I had one hand on the steering and the other behind me on the switch for the electronic depth control. Every time I hit the combine tracks, the **Honda** bucked as the sweeps broke through the compaction zones. Then I would leap forward again. It was the most fun I've had in a long time and, at an acre an hour, the job got done fairly quickly.

The **Kunz** chisel plow turned over the soil well. The dirt really flew. The electric actuator reacted fast enough to let me feather the depth through the compaction zones or when I hit heavier bottom ground.

I wouldn't recommend chiseling an 8-acre field with an **ATV** every day, but it did show what could be done. I do think that 43-in. chisel would be great for tilling wildlife plots and even large gardens. "

under the car. Gravel from the **SUV's** front wheel hit this plastic box and broke it open. Repair cost was about \$300. Also, this vehicle doesn't really have all-wheel-drive. When it gets stuck, only one front wheel and one rear wheel spin.

"I've had a constant problem with my **Polaris** Sportsman 500 **ATV**. If it has to go to 4-WD mode, and then out, often one front wheel stays locked in and it pulls to that side so I have to back up to release it. This is very inconvenient. I change front hub oil often, but it still sticks."

**Alan Altenbach, Reedsburg, Wis.:** "The **McCulloch** 2014 Eager Beaver chainsaw I bought in 1964 is my best buy of all time. It's equipped with a 14-in. blade. For years it was the only chainsaw I owned. It always starts on the first or second pull, even in cold weather. I bought an 18-in. chainsaw of another brand four years ago, but I still grab the **McCulloch** unless I'm cutting extra big or very hard wood."

**Dan Bodas, Pittsburg, Mo.:** "My 2001 **Chevrolet** 2500 HD Duramax pickup has an added power chip, Banks exhaust, and K&N filter so it has plenty of power to pull anything I want. It gets 20 mpg if I drive at less than 70 mph.

"My 2000 **Kubota** L4300 loader tractor with cab has been used every day since I bought it with no breakdowns. I use this trac-

tor to haul two big round bales, one on front and one on back. It can load the bales two high on a gooseneck trailer. I like the three remote hydraulic outlets.

"I also like my 2006 **Kubota** ZD25 60-in. riding mower."

**Joe Pukas, Binghamton, N.Y.:** "My two 2007 **Ingersol** lawn tractors are both best buys. One is a 20 hp model and the other a 23 hp model. The workmanship and high quality of materials used to build these tractors is unbelievable. They're built with heavy steel and have an all-welded assembly with no pressed steel. They also have a high quality paint job. The tractors were formerly built by Case."

**Rachael Crowe, Skull Valley, Arizona:** "A 1993 **Dodge** W250 pickup equipped with a **Cummins** diesel engine is my best buy. It has more than 276,000 miles and counting. It gets 19 mpg and can haul a 1,300-lb. load on bad roads. I wouldn't trade this pickup in at any price."

**Mark Johnson, Baudette, Minn.:** "My 1999 **DR** 26-in. field and brush mower is powered by a 15 hp **Kawasaki** engine that runs great and is easy on fuel with plenty of power. This mower will climb any hill that I can walk up. The mower deck follows uneven terrain and does a good job of cutting grass, weeds and brush."

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