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buckle in 1/4-in. increments so you can get it set exactly where you need it. When you sit down, you just push on a release knob and let the belt go enough so you're completely comfortable. Very easy to use. The one I bought fits waists from 28 to 56 in. by simply cutting off what you don't need. It's not available any more but there are many different brands out there – just do a Google search for 'ratchet belts'."



Grant Blenz, Springport, Mich.: "One of my worst buys is a **Willmar 800** fertilizer spreader. I bought it 3 years ago. It had paint coming off the first year. The dealer said I should get it sand-blasted and repainted at my own expense. I don't have any alternative as Willmar is now out of business."



John Rochester, Deerfield, Fla.: "My 'Hookaroon' made by **Peavey Manufacturing Co.** in Eddington, Maine, is the finest log hook I've ever used (www.peaveymfg.com; ph 888-244-0955). It also works well for jobs like stacking branches or carrying plywood. Versatile and handy."

Martin Heller, Berthold, N.D.: "My **Vermeer 8040** rotary mower is well-built and performs well. But it's a real pain in the rear to hook up or unhook from the tractor. For some unknown reason, instead of the 3-pt. hitch attaching in a normal way, the sick, twisted engineer who designed it decided it should be slid in from one side. This means that instead of spreading the 3-pt. arms and backing up to the machine, I have to back up to the machine a bit off center and then use my skid steer to move the mower over to fit onto the pins as they both have to attach from the same direction. I believe the engineer was dropped on his head as a child since this procedure is almost impossible to perform alone. It sometimes literally takes hours to attach/detach from the tractor when working alone. Once attached, the machine performs flawlessly."



Gary Swensen, Yankton, S.D.: "I've cut wood and old railroad ties for about 20 years with my **650EVL Echo** chainsaw. During

that time, I've worn out two cutting bars, one drive chain engine sprocket, and lots of chain. One trick I use is that when the saw gets hot – even though I set the auto chain oiler to the max – I stick the saw into a bucket of waste engine oil so it can cool off while I take a break.

"I've never done anything to the saw other than a few sparkplugs and replacing the worn parts. I used to work maintenance on an oil pipeline and one of the chemists told me to always use premium gas in small engines. It gives extra power and will store for up to 3 years as compared to regular gas, which starts turning into turpentine after a year. This saw still starts on the second or third pull today, just as it always did."

John Franklin, Sidney, Mont.: "My worst buy is a walk-behind **Jari** sickle mower. The three most important considerations when buying a piece of equipment are service, service, and service. Unfortunately, after buying this sickle mower in 2015, the Jari mower facility in Mankato, Minn., closed. The machine worked well when new – and I previously used a 1992 Jari mower for years – but now I need two new rubber, horizontal grooved tires. Does anyone know where to buy Jari parts?"

Austin Bronestine, Lewiston, Mo.: "Our 36-ft. **McFarlane** harrow has been a lifesaver. We bought it new in 2018 and it was well worth the expense."

Richard Ladner, Seale, Ala.: "I bought a new **Kawasaki Mule** side-by-side in 2019. This little Mule has been outstanding as I've hauled dirt, cinder blocks, railroad ties, T-posts and thousands of feet of wire through woods, up and down hills, and across wet bottoms. It takes all I throw at it and just keeps chugging along.

"I can't say I've had the same experience with any type of mole or vole repellent whether it's thumpers, electronic buzzers or traps. It's like opening a disco for them – they seem to come from far and wide."

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Skip Weed, Schuylerville, N.Y.: "Ryobi 40-volt cordless tools (trimmer, chainsaw and leaf blower) work as well as gas-powered tools. I'm 82 years old so I expect the batteries to last as long as I do."

Brian Gillespie, Warrensburg, Mo.: "I've used my **DeWalt 20V MAX XR 1/2-in.** impact drill to break loose lug nuts on skid steers and dump trucks. It's stronger than most air impacts and can easily be taken everywhere. I just wish I'd bought it sooner."

Buzz Heuchan, Crystal River, Fla.: "Our **Yanmar 2310D** is a great compact tractor with a loader. We use it regularly on our farm to mow pasture, maintain a gravel roadway, lift heavy stuff, bore holes for posts, etc. We've only performed routine maintenance and have had no issues with it."

Doug Schafer, Moberge, S.D.: "This is my 10th season using my **Honda** self-propelled lawnmower. With fresh gas, it starts on the first pull. I'm 74 and it starts very easily for me. The self-propel is variable, so I can adjust it to my pace. Overall, it's a fantastic mower. My one complaint is that the whole machine has to be tilted to change the oil."

David Doherty, Lebanon, Ore.: "My 2017 **Deere D125** twin hydro mower is an



Mower deck with cut off on front lip.

"My Experience With Cutlass Mower Blades"

John J. Strickland, Keysville, Ga.: "A reader in a previous issue reported on how much he liked his Cutlass mower blades, so I decided to tell you my story. I bought two **Cutlass** blade systems for my 2000 Woods 72-in. mower and my 2014 Cub Cadet 54-in. mower. Both have 3-blade mower decks. We have a lot of Bahia grass in my part of the state which is tough to cut as it has a tall thin stem that's difficult to pick up once it's been knocked down plus it's abrasive to blade edges.

"The Cutlass system has four small replaceable blades that pivot like the knives on rotary disk hay mowers. They improved the cutting ability of the Woods mower, but the Cub Cadet cut worse, due to the 1-in. setback between the blades and deck. I used both mowers a lot throughout 2019 and learned a lot. The 4-blade concept cuts cleaner than a single-blade system and the pivoting feature saves blades when you hit an object.

"However, the blade pivots wore excessively, and the spring clips became nonfunctional after grass goo caught underneath, jamming them upward. This meant the quick-change feature became useless. Also, the soft steel center discs were weak and bent.

"Since I'm a mechanical engineer, I decided to redesign the blade system. I contacted Cutlass and ordered straight flat blades with no 'sails' because they were wearing out quickly, leaving portions of the blade unused. Then I made my own center discs out of alloy steel with no cutouts. I made



New disc with its own blades.

new blade pivots out of heat-treated tool steel so they would stand up to grass strikes and eliminated the spring clips completely. The blades have to be unbolted now to remove them, but that's rare because I made my own blades out of one 5mm spring steel. To remove the disc assembly, I remove one bolt that holds the center disc in place.

"Finally, I modified each deck by cutting out all shrouds and the front deck lip to allow grass to come into the blades standing up. I also set the wheels wider apart.

"Mowing now is beautiful. It looks like my barber cut the lawn with nothing left standing. There's no dust cloud and no need to go over any area twice. Interestingly, the only parts left from the original Cutlass system are the button head screws that hold the pivots in place."

impressive machine. I've treated this mower as rough as others I've owned but only burned off one belt and that was my fault. I haven't bent a blade even when hitting rocks and tree limbs. On other mowers I've owned, I've bent blades, burned belts and broken towers. This one has over 500 hrs. and still no problems."

Bill McKeeman, Calgary, Alberta: "I bought a used 2004 **Honda Civic DX** in 2009. I've only replaced a timing belt, one ball joint, and disc brake pads. The car has had regular maintenance and is going to turn 300,000 km (186,411 miles) soon. It still uses no oil between oil changes and gets 50 plus on the highway and a bit better than 40 in town. It still has the battery I installed in 2009 but I have a new one for this winter."

Alex G. Somerville, Lincoln, Mich.: "I've owned several trucks over the years. My 2018 **Ford F350 4x4 SuperCab XLT 6.7** Power Stroke has been the most impressive. The towing capacity, fuel mileage, and ease of maintenance have all been ahead of any truck I've owned in the past. The steel in the frame is thicker and has a higher tensile strength than a GM or Dodge.

"My worst truck ever was a 2006 **GMC**

3500 6.6 Duramax. The frame and front end were built for paved highways. The Allison transmission was just a label. It was a real money pit."



Don McLaskey, Anacortes, Wash.: "Years ago I bought a **Drill Doctor** because it's so difficult to properly sharpen drill bits. I purchased it even though it seemed expensive. It's an amazing tool and worth far more than I paid. I do a lot of metal fabricating and whenever one of my drills has a hard time cutting, a few seconds on the Drill Doctor makes it cut like a dream (www.drilldoctor.com)."