



highly visible yellow ball on top that fits into a slotted bracket that bolts onto the mailbox. When the mailbox door is opened, the ball pops up. Sells for \$9.95 plus S&H.

Ralph Allswede, Eaton Rapids, Mich.: An Apollo AED 6500 diesel generator rates as Ralph's "worst buy". "At 17 hrs. the wiring on it burned up so I sent it back to the company. They repaired it at no cost, but I had

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to pay the \$165 freight charge. A sticker on the generator says 'Silent', but this unit is so noisy that I can't even stand next to it. Then at 35 hrs. the engine blew up. I finally gave up and bought a **Honda EU7000i** generator. It's super quiet and is a really nice unit. I have about 40 hrs. on it so far. I guess you get what you pay for."

Bob Corbin, Sykesville, Md.: "In 2000 I retired from farming and sold all my big equipment. I then bought a **New Holland Boomer TC29** loader tractor equipped with adjustable 3-pt. lower links and a remote hydraulic outlet. It's a super little tractor, and I've moved a mountain of dirt, gravel and mulch with it. The loader tears right through 4-ft. deep snowdrifts. I also use this tractor to split firewood every year, even though the hydraulics on it aren't very fast. The truth is, I'm not so fast any more, either.

"My worst buy is my **Clarke 120-volt welder**. It was advertised at 100 amps max, but I found the actual output to be only 45 amps which made it unusable for normal welding. So I went back to using a 220-volt welder, and this one is now gathering dust."

James Boyd, Galveston, Ind.: "I like the **Bobcat Rezhoh** cutting edge I mounted on the bucket of my Bobcat skid loader. It replaces



both a standard edge and a toothbar. I can grade, dig, level and back drag with no need to change-out. It has a specially designed serrated edge with flush-mounted teeth, so it'll dig into difficult terrain that standard edges can't handle. It works great to break up hard, dry clay and was almost like adding 20 hp and 2,000 lbs. to the skid loader, compared to when I used the bucket's original straight edge.

"I built my own grapple fork for the bucket

and it works great, too. It stays on the bucket all the time. I built it by shortening up the shanks off a chisel plow. A hydraulic cylinder mounts above the shanks and is used to pivot them up or down on a shaft off an old IH combine. The entire unit mounts on an angle iron frame that slips over the edges of the bucket and is bolted onto nuts welded inside the bucket. A length of sq. tubing ties all the shanks together.

"Works great for moving logs and brush. The shanks are made from high carbon steel, so I made sure to use a low hydrogen welding rod. I paid \$75 for the hydraulic cylinder, which was my only cost".

John Beachy, International Falls, Minn.: "I like my 2013 **Kuuma Vapor-Fire 100** high efficiency, wood gasification furnace (www.lampakuuma.com; ph 800 358-2049). Right away I noticed a big difference, because the 2-story chimney on our house doesn't build up with creosote anymore.

"The Kuuma furnace even cleaned up the crud that was still in the chimney. Keeping the heat inside the house instead of watching it go up the chimney is a real plus. The company sized the furnace top to fit our existing plenum with no problem. The money we spent on this furnace was well worth it."

Kim Wilde, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.: Kim likes his **Tirfor Griphoist**, a portable manual hoist with traversing wire rope (www.tractel.com). The lever-operated wire rope hoist is designed to lift, pull and place loads across great distances.

"I gave away my come-alongs after I purchased 3 of these Griphoists. I use them everywhere. For example, I use them to lift equipment that has been dropped off in the field or pasture; to lift and align heavy pieces; and to cut trees by myself."

Keene Babcock, Peck, Kansas: Keene uses **Startron** enzyme fuel additive in all his small engines to prevent any problems with ethanol (www.starbrite.com; ph 954 587-6280). The company says Startron allows hydrocarbon fuels to burn more completely for maximum performance.

"I have several old Kohler engines that wouldn't run properly, including the 16 hp Kohler engine on my riding mower. After trying many different fixes I finally dumped a mega dose of Startron into it. It seemed to help, as I was able to finish mowing that day. But the next time I started the engine I flooded it something terrible. I knew then that after adding Startron I didn't need to choke the engine as much.

"Now this engine starts on the first pull almost every time and runs 100 percent better. I've started adding Startron to my gas cans as I fill them and it has made a big difference. I also use it in mixed gas. It has the added benefit of preserving the gas much longer than any other fuel additive I've found. It's available at parts houses but I buy it at Walmart, in the marine section. The marine version treats more than twice as much fuel, for just \$1 more. I'm a real believer in this product."

Charles Myers, Zanesville, Ohio: Charles is the proud owner of a 2014 **Deere 5075M** "no cab" tractor. "We bought it after we lost our 1969 Deere 3020 diesel tractor in a fire. It had more than 24,000 hrs. on it and was a handy tractor around our barns. It was one of the few built in 1969 equipped with a side console.

"The 5075M has exceeded all our expectations. We equipped it with 15.5 - 38 tires, which gives it good ground clearance. It's a pleasure to drive, has a comfortable seat, a tilt steering wheel, handy controls, and an excellent transmission with power reverser. It has a lot of power for its size. I'd recommend

"Best Buy" Mini Excavator Ideal For Small Farms

"My 46 hp Kubota Mini Excavator is way more versatile than a tractor fitted with a loader and backhoe," says New Hampshire resident Steve Cunningham. "The 360 degree swing system lets me pile rocks, trees and dirt to one side of the machine or the other, or even completely behind me, without moving. A tractor backhoe has limited swing range, and it always takes time to lift the outriggers and reset the machine to excavate another area. When I have to move I just edge up a few feet on the tracks and keep on working."

Cunningham bought his used **KX161-3** Kubota when it was a year old. He uses it to move rocks, smooth his quarter mile-long driveway, uproot trees and stumps in his woods when cutting timber, and to work on landscape jobs around his yard.

"My wife actually suggested we look into one of these when she saw all the trouble I was having with the tractor and backhoe," says Cunningham. "We found this one with 500 hrs. on it and I couldn't be happier."

His machine has a 46 hp diesel engine and is 18 ft. long and 8 ft. wide. It weighs about 11,500 lbs. and has 16-in. wide steel tracks. It can pick up a 2-ton rock. The excavator arm will dig a hole 12 ft. deep in a 20-ft. radius and deposit dirt or gravel in a pile more than 16 ft. high. The bucket Cunningham has on the machine is about 2 ft. square. The machine also has a 6 1/2-ft. wide dirt blade.

"The machine doesn't have a cab, but it does have rollbars and a protective roof, which I like," says Cunningham. "I only use it during warm weather months, so a cab isn't necessary. I built a tool carrier on the back of the cab that's 5 ft. wide, 8 in. deep and 18 in. across so I can carry saws, picks and shovels into the woods," says Cunningham.

Other machine features are functional and operator friendly. Cunningham says "There's a hydraulic override so a person



Steve Cunningham says his 46 hp Kubota mini excavator is "way more versatile" than a tractor fitted with a loader and backhoe.

can't lift or pull too much and damage the machine. If I'm trying to dig harder than the machine will take, it will go into bypass, so a person can't hurt it. The machine hydraulics are calculated for that workload, which works great on stumps and rocks. My neighbor doesn't have that on his backhoe and he ripped apart the lift arm trying to move a rock that was too large for his machine."

Cunningham also likes the automatic idling system. It lowers the engine speed if hydraulics aren't used for 30 seconds, and automatically increases rpms when hydraulics are activated again. In the past year Cunningham has used the machine to smooth a new road in his woods, install hydronic water and irrigation lines and grade and smooth his driveway. Best of all, jobs his wife suggests are much easier, too.

"I built a gazebo roof on the ground, where it was easy to get at, and used the excavator arm as a construction crane to set the roof on top of the walls," says Cunningham. "I also used the bucket to position 100-lb. rocks in a walkway on our terraced garden, something that I never could've done with the backhoe. All in all, the machine is a great addition to our place."

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this tractor to anyone."

David Hanson, Waseca, Minn.: "My **Deere 6430** equipped with a **Deere 670** front-end loader is an excellent tractor."

J.C. Buckner, Canon City, Colo.: "In a recent issue of FARM SHOW a reader said his **DuraFork** manure rake was a best buy. However, in my opinion this is a mediocre buy at best. I run a horse ranch where we use DuraForks. While these forks are handy to use, they're not very durable. Every one I've used has split in the middle, usually within a year and long before it was worn out.

"When I purchase a DuraFork, the first thing I do is weld the back strap to the head. Then I weld a fender washer under the head bolt, which gives the fork the support it should have. It also helps the fork last until the tines wear out and break, which usually takes more than 2 years."

Ted Luckenbaugh, Abbottstown, Penn.: "My **Walker B** riding mower equipped with a 48-in. deck does a beautiful job without clumping the grass, even if the grass is wet. By pulling 2 pins I can flip the deck up, which makes it easy to clean and sharpen the blades. Everything on this mower is easy to get to except for a grease zerk on the pto shaft. The 2 belts that drive the pumps can be changed in just a minute or two. This mower is definitely built to last."

On the minus side, "The 18-volt batteries in my **DeWalt** cordless drill didn't last long

between charges, and after one year they wouldn't keep a charge at all. The battery's footprint is so small that whenever I set the drill down with a big spade bit in it, the drill falls over. I finally bought a **Porter Cable** 18-volt cordless drill and saw combo kit, and love it. It has a lot of power and doesn't fall over, even with the largest spade bit in it."

Dan Lamar, Elizabethtown, Ill.: "It has more than 800 hrs. on it with very few problems," says Dan, pleased with his **Bush Hog** zero-turn riding mower equipped with a Kohler 28 hp fuel-injected engine. "The engine starts easy without me having to choke it. The mower itself is built heavy and has a wide wheelbase that makes it very stable."

Brian and Diana Ellerbrock, Ottawa, Ohio: "My wife and I swear by **Steuarts Pain Formula** (steuartlaboratories.com; ph 877 210-9664). "We use it on any pain, muscle or joint. I use it on my knees and shoulder. It really works well, and we'll definitely be buying more."

Kent MacDougal, Yongse Island, S.C.: "I like **Gemplers Rust Converter** (www.gemplers.com; ph 800 382-8473). It chemically converts rust to an inert black protective barrier that can be painted over. It fires off on rust, the more the better, so there's no need to prep to bare metal. Just

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