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luck with Ford or GM pickups. "I bought a new 1989 **Ford** 1-ton pickup equipped with a 7.3-liter diesel engine. The engine went bad at about 89,000 miles and cost \$6,000 to fix. I traded it for a 1994 GM 1-ton pickup equipped with a 6.5-liter diesel engine, and it has had a lot of problems with the electronic injection. Both heads cracked at about 65,000 miles and had to be replaced. It has about 94,000 miles on it and has a severe blow-by problem, so it'll be going to the shop again soon. If Volvo ever made a 1-ton crew cab dually pickup, I'd buy it."

**Rick Adolphson, Grantsburg, Wis.:** "I'm well pleased with the **K & N** air filters I use on my cars (K&N Engineering, Inc., ph 800 858-3333 or 951 826-4000; www.knfilters.com). I had a car that ran good but



blowby was soaking the paper filter. After switching to a K & N filter the car's fuel efficiency improved by four miles per gallon, and it also runs better and uses less oil. I've also installed these filters on several vehicles with good engines and gained noticeably more power and several miles per gallon on each one. One vehicle that burned just a little oil has completely stopped burning oil. These vehicles all have anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 miles on them.

"My parents have had problems with the automatic transmissions in all three of their late model Chrysler front wheel drive cars equipped with V-6 engines. The problems developed with a New Yorker at 112,000 miles and with a Concord LXI which started acting up at a little over 100,000 miles when they traded it in. Their brand new 300 model had a lot of water in the transmission, and they're still waiting for a replacement transmission. The dealer wanted to install an older rebuilt transmission in this brand new car. But my mom contacted Chrysler and it paid off because the dealer was told to install a new transmission."

**Harry Semler, Sterling, N.Y.:** Harry likes his 2002 **Heatmor** outdoor furnace. "It's safe to use, doesn't leave a mess in our house, and maintains an even 70° temperature at all times. Our house feels warmer because hot water is always circulating through the heat exchanger in the gas furnace's plenum. As a result, when the thermostat calls for heat we get a blast of warm air right away, whereas with our gas furnace we always got a blast of cold air when the fan first came on. It uses a reasonable amount of wood, and we can even burn a lot of junk wood. We also use it to heat our hot water."

**Leonard Gilbreath, Meridian, Texas:** "The 27-ton wood splitter I bought nine years ago from **Tractor Supply Company** is our best buy. Over the years I've used it to split about 100 cords of wood.

"My 2003 **Home Products** weedeater is my worst buy. I can't keep string in it, and I've already had to put a \$42 gas tank on it. The tank came loose at the seam."

**Joel Gargagliano, Pierson, Mich.:** Joel nominates his 2001 **Chevrolet** heavy duty Duramax pickup equipped with an Allison

automatic transmission as his "best buy." "It has about 133,000 miles and all it has ever needed is a new rear wheel seal. Otherwise it has required only routine maintenance. About half of those miles were for hauling a 28-ft. fifth wheel enclosed cargo trailer, so I'm hauling gross loads of about 15,000 to 20,000 lbs. most of the time. This pickup has a lot of power and gets 12 to 16 mpg hauling a trailer and 19 to 20 mpg empty."

**William G. Hurd, Meriden, Iowa:** A **Stihl** 029 18-in. chain saw rates as William's "worst buy." "It always started hard, and then one day it wouldn't start at all. I took it to the dealer who said it would cost \$300 to repair. I brought it back home and then bought a **Sears Craftsman** 18-in. chain saw that cost about half as much as it would have cost to repair the Stihl. The Sears model has already cut more wood than the Stihl ever did, and it starts a lot easier. It has been trouble-free.

"My **General Motors** cars, trucks, and pickups, as well as my **Massey Ferguson** tractors and implements, have all been best buys."

**Michael P. Henderson, Lake Dallas, Texas:** "My 1999 **Ford** F-250 pickup has about 110,000 trouble-free miles on it. It runs great."

**Eric Averwater, Batavia, Ohio:** "My 2004 **Exmark** zero turn mower equipped with a 27 hp engine and 60-in. deck is my best buy. It makes mowing grass a fun job. My wife loves to cut grass with it. It's very comfortable to drive, and the control layout is natural to your body. Also, the drive system is smooth and positive with no play in the steering levers. When mowing, I never need to run over already-mowed grass because it turns so simple and quick.

"My **Lanair** HI 100 waste oil furnace is my worst buy. Right out of the box it developed electrical problems. I made a phone call to the company's technical service people, and they were quite helpful and sent repair parts out the next day. But I had to install the parts myself and send the bad parts back. After the first year the firebox developed cracks and the company sent me an upgraded replacement, but the quality just wasn't there. The relatively low price was a big reason I bought this brand. I guess it's true you get what you pay for."

**Larry King, Maryville, Tenn.:** "My 1968 **Chevrolet** WT 1500 pickup equipped with a Vortec V-6 engine and automatic transmis-

**"The low price is why I bought this brand. I guess you get what you pay for."**

sion is my best buy. I bought it used with a lot of miles on it and replaced the brake rotors, pads, drums and shoes. Now it has more than 170,000 miles on it but still doesn't use any oil. It has a smooth ride.

"My 2000 **Sears Craftsman** lawn tractor equipped with a 23 1/2 hp Kohler engine and 60-in. deck has had a lot of problems. Fortunately, I purchased a maintenance contract when I bought the mower. The deck had to be replaced, as well as the rear end, transmission, battery, fuse, and blades. A blade shaft snapped off at the bearing. Now the juncture of the fender assembly is splitting under the seat where it joins the frame. It's impossible to mow evenly. Also, the entire front axle and steering rod had to be replaced."

**Paul and Jean Blasé, Hordville, Neb.:** "I'm well pleased with my 2004 **Deere** 8120 tractor. It has a quiet cab and a comfortable

## Ground Heat System Cools, Heats Home For \$100/Year

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

When A.D. Baggerley, of Loyal, Wis. put up a new 1,600 sq. ft. home with a full basement in 1990, he took a chance and equipped it with a geothermal heating system. Now, 15 years later, he says it's one of the best decisions he ever made.

The system consists of a heat pump that pulls heat out of water that runs through big loops of 3/4-in. black plastic pipe buried 10-ft. deep in his backyard. He buried four loops 1-ft. apart in a 75-ft. long trench.

There are no plumbing connections outside the house. The tubes run to a manifold inside the house before running through the heat pump.

Forced air moves heat through the house.

His electric company gives them off-peak rates of 4 cents per kwh because they have a wood stove that acts as an alternate heat source if the company needs to shut off his power during peak hours.

"The cost of the heat pump, installation, and ground loop was less than \$6,000. The average cost to operate it for heat and air conditioning per year for the first 15 years was just \$100 thanks also in part to added insulation. The unit's compressor failed after 12 years and cost \$700 to replace. Otherwise, no problems."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, A.D. Baggerley, N10158 Park Lane, Loyal, Wis. 54446 (ph 715 255-8175).

seat. It's equipped with new-style lights which were helpful during last fall's harvest."

**Kent and Deanna Schwendiman, Ucon, Idaho:** "The **Allis Chalmers** B-12 garden tractor I bought used about 32 years ago is my best buy. I don't know exactly how old it is. I use it every spring to till my garden and every winter to clean my driveway, as well as my neighbors' driveways. I also use it to mow my lawn every week, and my children made spending money using it to mow lawns for widows. This tractor may be sick and tired, but it still does the job."

**Lois Hunt, Heber, Ariz.:** Lois nominates her 2003 **Flowtron** electric leaf eater as her "worst buy." "I used it two or three times and had to replace the plastic cutting lines each time after only about one minute of use. Then the motor jammed, and I gave up on this product. It was a total waste of money. I could probably cut up leaves faster using a pair of scissors."

**W.S. Holt, Prospect, Tenn.:** "My 2004 **Husqvarna** chain saw equipped with a 20-in. bar and chain is my best buy. It has been trouble-free, starts good, and handles well. I'd recommend it to anyone."

**Royal Hohl, Salina, Kansas:** A 2002 **Sears Craftsman** riding mower equipped with an automatic transmission and 48-in. deck rates as Royal's "worst buy." "The day I brought it home I was setting it up when the spring to the neutral shift rod came off and wouldn't stay on. Also, the electric clutch that controls the blade engagement locks and won't engage the blade. It happens every time I use the mower. The deck has to be cleaned often so I can keep it running. The transmission is so weak that in reverse gear the mower will barely back up on level ground. However, the engine does have a lot of power and starts and runs good.

"The deck is mounted too low. I've adjusted it according to the owner's manual, but even with the adjustment lever at its highest level, the bottom of the deck is only about three inches above the ground. If the deck didn't have four anti-scalping wheels I think it could be lowered all the way to below-ground level. Another problem is that the magnet holding the hood down came off within the first couple of hours of use.

"I've owned Sears Craftsman equipment for many years, but lately I've found their products to be weak and poorly made. My Craftsman rototiller had such flimsy handles that the tubing around the welds broke during the first season of use."

**David Keith, Rockford, Iowa:** "My **Black & Decker** leaf blower/vac is my worst buy. The first time I used the blower the armature burned out. The company repaired it under warranty and sent it back to me. But

the second time I used it the same thing happened. Since the warranty had expired, I was stuck with a worthless piece of junk that I was able to use less than two hours. I'll never buy Black & Decker tools again."

**Aud M. Kinser, Graham, Texas:** A **Warn**



**Works** model 3700 DC power winch sold by rates as Aud's "best buy" (www.gowarn.com). "I use this winch on my 3/4-ton pickup to haul 1,600 lb. hay bales up onto the bed. It takes only a few seconds to do the job. It works great and sure beats hand cranking."

**Victor Thornton, Carrolton, Va.:** "My 2003 **Cub Cadet** 1527 garden tractor equipped with a mower deck is my worst buy. It won't bag grass or leaves - it just plugs up. There's rust all over the tractor coming from under the paint, and even on the deck. The mower deck cuts unevenly, which really makes our lawn look bad. However, the engine runs great."

**David Niehaus, Baldwin, Ill.:** David's impressed with his 2004 **Drill Doctor**. "I'm always in need of a sharp drill bit. I can't sharpen drill bits by eye and all the other drill bit sharpening gadgets on the market are better left at the store. Last Christmas my wife surprised me with a Drill Doctor 750 which handles up to a 3/4-in. dia. bit. Wow! Now I can have a sharp bit in minutes that will cut great and last a long time."

On the minus side, he lists his **Porter Cable** 4 1/2-in. side grinder "I try to buy the best tools I can afford, but my decision to buy this side grinder for more than \$125 turned out to be a mistake. It burned up the first time I used it. I drove 60 miles to return it to the dealer and got a replacement. However, a couple of weeks later that one failed, too. Lesson learned. I threw it away and went back to using my old **Black & Decker** 4 1/2-in. grinders. They last a long time and the company will rebuild them for about \$50. And they offer a one-year guarantee."

**Marty Gallaher, Hartford, Ala.:** Marty's impressed with his 1989 **Mercedes-Benz** 260E sedan. "We bought this car used in 1996 with about 100,000 miles on it. Now it has 500,000 miles but still doesn't use any oil. It's one of five Mercedes that we own. They all last a long time."

A 1999 **General Electric** double oven rates as his "worst buy." "We paid about \$1,000 for it, but it quit working after only about 14