

Eric Hendricks, Brinnon, Wash.: "Our 2001 **Avalon** Mission woodstove burns clean (www.avalonfirestyles.com). We use it to heat our 1,500 sq. ft. house, and hardly any soot develops in the stovepipe. The stove's front

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glass is self cleaning so I only have to clean it once every three weeks or so. There's no catalytic burner to mess with.

"This stove is very efficient as it burns the smoke and no chimney is needed. It's so efficient that the first winter we used six fewer cords of wood than in the past."

Paul Erickson, Roseau, Minn.: Paul nominates his 2009 **Country Clipper** JAZee Pro zero turn riding mower as his "best buy". "I love the maneuverability offered by joystick steering, and the mower's high blade speed and deep deck design provide a beautiful cut with no plugging or windrowing. All I've replaced is one idler pulley."

Gary Meers, Verona, Va.: "I like my 2000 **Ford F-250** heavy duty pickup equipped with a 5.4-liter gas engine. But at about 200,000 miles I gunned the engine to get out of a ditch and blew out a small hydraulic tensioner on the right timing chain that works on oil pressure. At first the engine lost oil pressure, but it came back. However, the loose chain wore a hole in the cover. Now it sounds like a valve is tapping, and oil is slinging up onto the underside of the hood. The engine still runs okay but I don't dare rev it up. It'll have to be fixed or the chain could jump the sprocket teeth. My advice: if you have a pickup with high miles, don't gun the engine."

Eugene Hagene, Pinckneyville, Ill.: "No problems with my 2008 **Jacobsen** Bobcat zero turn riding mower (ph 866 469-1242; www.bobcatturf.com), which is equipped with a 60-in. deck and 31 hp engine. I've put several hundred hours on it."

Jim Ruen, Lanesboro, Minn.: "The RC Series low tunnel hoop bender from **Lost Creek Greenhouse Systems** (www.hoopbenders.net) has been a great addition to my garden. The bender turns 10-ft. lengths of conduit into 4-ft. wide hoops in no time.



"For the past two years, plastic-covered hoops have given my tomatoes and peppers a head start in the spring. I did learn the hard way to make sure to ventilate on warm days when a bed of peppers burned up.

"Cold winters and hot summers are no match for the low tunnels I've used with lettuce and spinach. I plant in late summer and pick greens until early December. Then I leave the plastic on through the winter, and the bed greens up in early March for daily picking by the end of April. Last summer I put shade cloth over hoops on a spring planted bed and picked spinach and lettuce until early August. I also shaded a young bed of rhubarb, and it stayed lush and full all through the summer, while neighboring plants dried up in the heat and sun.

"This year I hope to bend some larger hoops for use with netting to keep birds out of a blueberry patch and with plastic to stretch my tomato season well past the first frost."

Nicholas Gibbs San Martin, Ossining, N.Y.: "I like my 2011 **NorthStar** pressure washer equipped with a 13 hp Honda engine and Cat pump (www.northerntool.com). It always starts and has plenty of power. It's reliable and works great."

JR Priesgen, Rubicon, Wis.: "In 1986 I bought a new **Deere** 185 riding mower. My dad used it, my son used it, and now my grandson uses it. We change the oil twice a year and it receives regular maintenance. It has never needed any major repairs, and it never sits outside."

Melvin Troyer, Mercer, Penn.: Melvin's impressed with his 2011 **Cobra** DHC 2000 pistol grip torch (ph 248 499-8122; www.cobratorches.com). "This torch saves 40 to 50 percent on acetylene and oxygen because the pressure always stays at a low 4 lbs., no matter what. I've used this torch to dress up a lot of horseshoes. It comes in a kit with several different cutting attachments. It does a nice job of cutting with a little practice, almost like a plasma cutter."

Robert Anderlik, Boone, Iowa: "A couple of years ago we bought a telescoping flag pole from **Uncommon USA** at a farm show (ph 800 470-2210; www.uncommonflagpoles.com). We like the pole so last summer we bought a solar-powered light from the same company that fits on top of the flag but it only lit up the top of the flag. We returned it.

"The **Yamaha** Terra Pro 4-wheeler was bought used several years ago is a best buy. It's equipped with a pto shaft which we use to power a 38-in. bush hog mower. We've used this 4-wheeler a lot but it just keeps on going. It doesn't use any oil and very little gas. It doesn't have 4-WD, but it does have a differential lock which really helps if the vehicle gets hung up on anything. I don't think they make this model any more, but I'd sure hate to part with mine.

"We like the 1999 **Dodge** Grand Caravan we bought used in 2002 with about 90,000 miles on it. We drove the van until 2011, when we sold it to a friend with more than 235,000 miles on it. It never required more than routine maintenance. I changed the oil and filter every 3,500 miles and never had to add oil between changes. Just before we sold the van the original muffler went bad, so I replaced it as well as the rear wheel brake linings. The new owner really likes it, too."

Charles Gaerke, Fort Recovery, Ohio: "My best buy is the 1976 **Deere** 4430 tractor I bought used with about 2,500 hours on it. It now has almost 15,000 hours but my sons still use it regularly, and it's still worth about what I paid for it."

Ted Bostick, Liberty, Ind.: "My 1970 **Ford** 4000 tractor always starts right up and is easy to drive. It turns short which makes it easy to get around trees when bush hogging in the woods."

Stewart Ellis, Clearbrook, Va.: "This little workhorse will do most any job we ask it to do," says Stewart, pleased with his **Deere** 4 by 6 diesel Gator utility vehicle. "It has required only routine maintenance. Works great for feeding round bales. A tank of fuel will last us for days."

Jim Martin, Baker City, Ore.: Jim's disappointed with his 2008 **Dodge** 2500 diesel pickup. "Poor fuel economy, poor brakes, and trying to change the oil and fuel filters on this pickup is a nightmare. There are no drain plugs on the front or rear differentials, and the dealer wanted \$164 to change the oil on each differential. The driver's vision on the left side is greatly obstructed by the left pillar post, which is



Chad Onken likes Bunning manure spreaders so much that he now handles parts support and sales for the company in Iowa and eastern Nebraska.

Chad Onken, Carroll, Iowa: "We like our **Bunning** manure spreaders so much we handle parts support and sales for the company in Iowa and Eastern Nebraska. Their 3-year warranty is unheard of in the manure spreader business (ph 306 781-4820; www.dutchmanufacturing.com).

"We bought our first one in 2009 and later sold it to a guy in Oklahoma who's still using it. We have purchased three more since and use them for spreading manure, lime and potash. We even use them to spread rock in our feedlots.

"The multiple sizes available fit almost anyone's needs. Models range from 10 to 50 tons, all with vertical beaters. We can control our spread across 30 to 50 ft. and from as low as a ton an acre to 40 tons per acre.

"The augers and knives are made from Hardox iron that's so hard they just don't break. They'll chew up rocks and spit them out. Compared to other manure spreaders on the market, they're like driving an army tank versus a car."



Bunning models range from 10 to 50 tons, all with vertical beaters.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Onken Feedlots, 24568 140th St., Carroll, Iowa 51401 (712 830-6394; cconken95@gmail.com).

too large and poorly located."

Marvin Hammer, Bartow, Fla.: "I own a 1972 **Yanmar** YM 18 tractor equipped with an 18 hp diesel engine and 5-ft. belly mower. I've used it to mow 5 acres for 40 years and it has never failed me. It's a great tractor."

Anthony Beard, Prescott, Mich.: "We've had good luck with the 2008 **Kubota** M7040 tractor we bought used with 566 hours. We've put 200 hours on it. It has a lot of power and is easy on fuel."

On the "worst buy" side, he lists the 30 by 72-ft. **ClearSpan** hoop building he bought from FarmTek. "We paid a premium price for this building. It's advertised as being 'made in the U.S.A.', yet the word 'China' was stamped on about half the parts. The building's purlin clamps take two bolts, but the bolts on ours came with one 7/16-in. nut and one 10mm nut. It's very discouraging to find out about this problem when you're working 10 ft. off the ground. Also, some of the clamps were missing and we lost time waiting for them to be delivered. When we went to install an end panel we discovered it was the wrong size and wouldn't fit properly. There were other problems, too.

"As a result of these problems, I had to call customer service several times over the course of two days. Every rep I talked to seemed to think the problem was due to a lack of skill on my part, and not a problem with their product. Finally I was able to talk to someone who understood the problem and resolved it immediately. Too bad I had to talk to four people before I found him.

"The company stood behind its product, but I had to fight with them over too many problems. I plan to put up several more hoop barns in the future, but next time I'll go with a cheaper brand. This company has a good building, but they need to work on their customer service."

Tom Crittenden, Mansfield, Penn.: "My 2011 **Kubota** RTV 1100 utility vehicle has a great cab, air conditioner, heater, radio and

dump box. My complaint is that the machine is really gutless on hills and the gears are hard to shift. The company knows about these problems but doesn't do anything about it. I've heard that some company offers a gear shifting upgrade for a few hundred dollars, and another offers a power boost solution for a few thousand dollars. But wouldn't it be nice if Kubota would just solve the problem on its own?"

Jerry Woosley, Morristown, Ind.: "Several years ago I bought a used 1997 **Chevrolet** S10 pickup to replace a 1990 S10 that my son totaled. I've put more than 120,000 miles on it with no major problems. I use it to run back and forth from the house or barn to our fields and to town.

"When the stamped steel axle on my **MTD Poulan** riding mower broke, I called the dealer only to find out he had died. With no dealers around I called the company asking for a replacement front axle, but all I got was the run-around. So I got my welder out and repaired the axle by myself."

Rick Connell, Holland Centre, Ontario: "My **Deere** dealer has been in the business for 62 years. His name is Ivan Carmichael and he started a dealership in Chatsworth, Ontario in 1951. Over the years he sold and serviced thousands of Deere tractors and other equipment. In the 1990's, Deere decided it should have less dealers so Ivan joined a dealership in Walkerton and they called it Northridge Tractor. In the early 2000's, Deere again decided to get rid of dealers so Ivan joined Huron Tractor, which has 9 different locations. I hope Deere benefitted from these decisions because the Carmichaels, and the farmers in this area, did not. However, we're fortunate to still have this good dealership while Case, International, Ford and Allis Chalmers are all gone. Today, Ivan can still be seen at the dealership almost every day of the week. His daughter, son and two son-in-laws work there, too."