

Continued from previous page

transmission. This pickup can seat six people and haul cargo in the bed while also towing a trailer. It has a lot of power and gets 22 mpg empty.”

“**Harbor Freight** sells cheap tools that work fine for some jobs. But it doesn’t pay to buy cheap hacksaw blades. They break easy and can damage your work and skin your hands up. I think it’s better to buy one good blade than five cheap ones, even if it costs more.”

Walt Woelfel, Walton, N.Y.: “I like my **Deere 2305** compact tractor equipped with a front-end loader and 54-in. mower deck. I use the mower to cut four acres of grass and the loader to haul wood and topsoil. I made forks that attach to the loader bucket, which come in handy. It’s a great little tractor.”

Michael Roccati, Suffield, Conn.: Michael’s happy with his 1975 **Ford 1000** tractor. “This was Ford’s entry into the compact tractor market in the 1970’s. The tractor was made in Japan and is built solid. It’s equipped with a 2-cyl. diesel engine that has plenty of power. I use this tractor for many chores around our property including plowing snow with a rear grader blade, mowing brush, and fertilizing our lawn.”

Adam Brubaker, Mount Hermon, Ky.: “My boss and I both like **Aircat** impact wrenches. He has a 2-year-old 1404, a 1/2-in. drive model that has a lot of power and sells for about \$160. I recently bought a 1601 3/4-in. drive model that’s also quiet and powerful. I also have experience with the **Ingersoll Rand 231A 1/2-in. drive** impact wrench. It’s not as powerful and is louder, but it’s durable and performs well. It sells for about \$130.

“We use 6-in. angle grinders a lot at work, and the best ones typically hold up for about a year. We’ve found the **DeWalt D28144** model to be one of the best. The **Metabo 6-in. model WE14-150Q** works good but is higher priced.

“I like the Pittsburgh professional 301-piece mechanics tool kit I bought at **Harbor Freight**. It comes with both SAE and metric 1/4, 3/8, and 1/2-in. drives. It’s constructed mostly from chrome Vanadium and comes in a good blow mold case. This tool kit is well-made and reasonably priced.”

Ben Schmucker, LaFarge, Wis.: “I like my 2011 **Troy-Bilt** reel-type push mower (www.troybilt.com). This is the first year the company has offered one. It’s built fairly heavy but pushes easily. It also mows clean and cuts easy. Cutting height can be easily changed by adjusting two levers.”

Mike Kennedy, Naperville, Ill.: “The Fire Hose Arctic parka I bought from **Duluth Trading Company** is my best buy. I wear it in below zero temperatures and wind chills, and it makes me feel like it’s 70 degrees outside. My dogs need to come inside well before I do.”

Randy Russ, Superior, Mont.: “One year ago I bought a **Metro 32-in. barrel** extension for my shotgun, and I love the way it works (ph 605 787-6321; www.metrogun.com). It’s for hunters who want quiet shotguns for a variety of reasons. The extended barrel reduces the sound of a shotgun blast to a thud similar to closing a pickup door.

“I can hit almost anything at 50 yards or more with no problem. The only trick is getting the shotgun out of the house without hitting something with the long barrel.”

Peter Gottsche, Westfield, Mass.: A2005 **Deere 790** diesel loader tractor equipped with a backhoe rates as Peter’s “best buy.” “It always starts right up and has required no repairs. With chains on all four wheels I can plow snow up a mountain road with a 300-ft. rise. I’ve also used this tractor to haul logs

from the forest and to move large amounts of soil and tree stumps. It’s enjoyable to drive.”

Kirk Krofka, Frewsburg, N.Y.: “My 2010 **Vicon 713T** rotary rake can handle either a 22-ft. windrow or two 11-ft. windrows. It does the work of three side delivery rakes, and it does it much better.

“My 2000 **Deere 335** round baler has performed flawlessly while requiring only routine maintenance.”

Shawn Anderson, Cokato, Minn.: “I ordered some shirts from **Walt’s Wholesale Clothing Co.**, but three months and multiple e-mails and phone calls later I have yet to receive the shirts or get my money back. I’m disappointed in the company’s customer service and won’t do business with them again.”

Jerry Moriarity, Winona, Minn.: Jerry’s impressed with his 2010 **Ridgid 18-volt** cordless drill kit which includes a sawzall, mini impact driver, and light. “The drill and sawzall will operate practically all day long on two batteries. I used these tools to build a 2-story, 36 by 40-ft. barn where there was no electricity. The tools had plenty of power and held up fine.”

He’s disappointed with his 2000 **Dodge 2500** diesel pickup. “At about 93,000 miles the air compressor evaporator had to be replaced at a cost of \$1,300, and at about 105,000 miles the pickup quit running while I was driving on the highway and had to be towed in. The lift pump and fuel injection pump had to be replaced at a cost of \$2,200. The pickup also has a steering problem that causes the truck to wander. I won’t buy another Dodge.”

Duane O. Hansen, Sheridan, Mich.: “My **Cub Cadet 42-in. riding** mower equipped with a Kohler engine works faster than others on the market. Some things I like about it: the deck rides on four wheels, there are grease fittings on the blade housing, it turns short, and it’s fuel efficient. Also, the deck is easy to remove.”

Jerry Brandt, La Grange, Mo.: “I bought a **Homelite 35cc** chainsaw about a year ago and have had nothing but trouble when trying to start it. I took the saw to two different repair shops but both of them refused to work on it. One said the starter parts on this chainsaw are made of plastic and were defective at the factory. The company refuses to do anything to help. I plan to sell the saw on eBay. I won’t buy a Homelite product again.”

Shirley Tipple, Lancaster, Ohio: “My 1997 **Kubota 5400** tractor has about 2,088 hrs. on it and is easy to operate. I use it for baling hay, mowing pastures, driving in fence posts, pulling logs, and tilling my garden.

“My 2003 **Staber** clothes washer doesn’t extract water out of my clothes as well as other brands. It does save on water use – in part because whenever I needed to wash a comforter or a large load of clothes I took them to our local laundromat. The machine finally quit working completely. I didn’t have time to repair it myself, so I replaced it with an older model Maytag that I bought for \$75 at an estate auction.”

Sam Doak, Winfield, Penn.: “I bought my **Kawasaki 250 4-wheeler** mostly for fun, but over time it has become my major work vehicle. I live a half mile from the dairy farm where I work and drive the 4-wheeler to the barn at 3:45 a.m. to milk the cows, summer and winter. I fill the gas tank every week. I use it to water and feed animals all over our farm, too.”

Thomas Houska, Mahanomen, Minn.: “My **Deere 3720** compact tractor is easy on fuel. No problems.

“My **Bobcat 450** tractor runs hot whenever



The Franzenburgs use a high output Year-A-Round corn burning furnace to heat greenhouses equipped with radiant floor heating.

They Heat Greenhouse Crops With A Corn-Burning Furnace

By C.F. Marley, Contributing Editor

Eric and Ann Franzenburg of Van Horne, Iowa, raise corn and soybeans on 400 acres and grow specialty crops on their other 100 acres. They have 3 greenhouses where they raise strawberries and other high-value crops on raised beds. They use a high output Year-A-Round corn burning furnace and a radiant floor heating system to heat the 3 greenhouses. They also have a “hoop house” that relies on passive solar heat.

Greenhouse crops include medicinal herbs, tomatoes, ginger, greens, flowers, tomatoes, blueberries and strawberries, which they sell to grocery stores and at farmer’s markets. “We grow the corn on our farm so even though right now corn prices are relatively high, corn is still cheaper than natural gas and is a renewable resource,” says Ann.

The Year-A-Round corn furnace is located in a big metal shed that’s adjacent to all 3 greenhouses. “We use the radiant floor system to heat the ground, not the air,” says Ann. “After the crop is up, we use row covers to hold heat down around the plants.”

When they installed the radiant heating



Row covers capture heat above the heated floors in greenhouse.

system, they removed 18 in. of topsoil, laid down foam insulation, stapled tubing to the top of the sheets of insulation, and put the topsoil back over everything.

They put up the hoop house last fall and use it to grow greens such as spinach lettuce. “The hoop house lengthens our growing season by 6 weeks,” notes Ann.

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it’s working hard in 85 to 90 degree weather. I’d like to know if anyone else has had heating problems with this tractor, and what they did about it. Also, the cab is noisy and I don’t like the way the pto hooks up.”

Larry Mahanna, Elgin, Ore.: “The well for our new house has high concentrations of iron and manganese, which results in stained appliances. While there isn’t a health risk, the water’s odor and taste are objectionable. We contacted several companies for a treatment solution and received quotes, some as high as \$4,000 to \$8,000. Finally, we learned about **Budget-Water Filters** which offered a solution for less than \$900 (ph 800 701-9914; www.budgetwater.com). The filter was easy to install and immediately solved the problem. Better yet, the filter is maintenance-free for life.”

Elvin Eberly, Trenton, Ky.: “I bought a new **Troy-Bilt Super Bronco** rototiller because the company’s old rototillers had a reputation for being good, heavy-duty machines. But something happened in the meantime, and now these newer rototillers are like other cheap imports. One drawback is the poor engineering in the placement of

the transmission pulley. To change the belt when it tears – which happens frequently – you have to remove the pulley from the shaft so you can slip the new belt between some side frame pieces. In just a few years most of the bearings in the transmission on this machine have failed twice, and the main gear ground down to shavings. Anyone need a red boat anchor?”

Will Mack, Sudbury, Mass.: “I like my **Ryobi EB 160** gas-powered hammer drill. I use it to drill holes in granite before splitting it with a wedge and feathers. Even if this hammer drill sits for months, when I want to use it again it’ll fire right up and be ready to go.”

Alan J. Shukaitis, Pen Argyl, Penn.: Alan bought a used **Deere 750 4-WD** tractor 5 years ago. “We run a small produce operation and use our 750 a lot to rototill, cultivate, plant potatoes, hill corn and beans, etc. We even modified an old horse-drawn digger to mount on the tractor’s 3-pt. hitch. This tractor has never let us down. It’s the perfect size for one-row-at-a-time farming.

“It’s impossible to control seed depth placement with my **Covington** planter, which leads to spotty emergence of plants.