

is running full throttle. The deck is made of 1/4-in. steel and reinforced around the edges, across the top and down the sides. A 1-in. wide piece of flat steel on the bottom of the frame is angled up at the front and back to provide a smooth surface for the mower to ride on.

"The mower weighs a little over 1,600 lbs, so it's definitely built to handle the toughest cutting jobs out there. Having it mount on the front of a skid steers makes it a lot easier to operate than 3-pt. mowers that mount on back of tractors. I'd recommend this mower to anyone."

**Dan Tysiachney, Edinboro, Penn.:** "I had an old set of Ridgid 18-volt NiCad batteries that would no longer take a charge. I read in FARM SHOW about the quality work that Voltman Batteries does rebuilding power tool battery packs that have gone bad (www.voltmanbatteries.com; ph 419 526-1570). I called the company and sent my batteries off. They were returned in about 1 1/2 weeks, better than new."

**Ken Beekman, Brandon, Wis.:** "My 1996 Deere 6 by 4 Gator utility vehicle equipped with a gas engine has saved me miles of walking. It's handy for doing everything from feeding cattle to running to the field for repairs, picking rocks and delivering lunch. I've spent only about \$500 on repairs, not including batteries and tires."

**Robert G. Seip, Lennile Farm, Alburtis, Penn.:** "I have enjoyed and learned much from FARM SHOW for many years. But I think you are doing a disservice to your readers with the story on **Empress Splendor** trees in the 2015 issue of the Best of FARM SHOW. Some years ago I planted Empress trees for their beauty, but soon learned they are very invasive, producing lots of seeds that sprout up everywhere, crowding out native plants. They are not a hardwood. The wood is soft with little rot resistance. We are blessed in this country with many wonderful native hardwoods. We don't need another invasive tree."

**Emil Smith, Franklin, Wis.:** "My 2014 Paslode 18-ga., gas cartridge nail gun fired one stick of nails but then quit working. I replaced it with a new one but got the same results. I finally got my money back and went to Harbor Freight where I bought a small air compressor, hose and 18-ga. nail gun. It has never failed and cost only about one third as much as the Paslode."

**James White, Blossom, Texas:** James nominates his 2001 Dixon ZTR zero turn riding mower equipped with an 18 hp Kohler engine and 42-in. deck as his "best buy". "I used this mower so much that I wore out the deck and had to replace it. The engine has several thousand hours on it but still doesn't use any oil."

**Glen Hoffart, Osmond, Neb.:** A 2013 Ford F-250 crew cab diesel pickup rates as Glen's "best buy". "This is my fifth Ford diesel and they just keep getting better. It drives good, has room to haul our grandkids, plenty of power, and is fuel efficient."

"My 2012 New Holland Boomer 40 tractor equipped with a front-end loader is real handy and gets used all the time. The hydrostatic transmission is so easy to operate that even my grandkids can help me."

**Brian Baum, Fort Morgan, Colo.:** "We use it daily on our ranch and truck garden. It has worked flawlessly," says Brian about his 2007 Kubota UTV 500 4-WD utility vehicle. "With 4-WD and a differential lock this rig can go anywhere, and it can haul a big payload. The bench seat sets low so it's easy to slide on and off, even when carrying a newborn calf. It's equipped with seat belts and a roll cage so we feel safe letting young

children drive it, which is something we'd never consider doing with an ATV."

**Lowell Patterson, Eighty Four, Penn.:** "I'm impressed with my Brother PT-2030 portable label maker. I use it to make laminated, adhesive-backed labels for indoor or outdoor use (www.brother-usa.com; 908 704-8235). The label maker comes with a keyboard and operates on 6 AA batteries or an AC adapter. It's easy to learn to use. At least 50 different types of labels are available, ranging from 1/4 to 3/4 in. wide.

"The label maker normally sells for about \$50, but I was able to buy it on sale at Staples for only \$25. I can't believe how well it works."

"I purchased it because I had recently bought a used diesel truck and wanted to make sure no one accidentally fueled it up with gas."

**Bud and Mary Tackett, Chillicothe, Ohio:** "I bought a used 1967 Deere 300 B backhoe loader in 1978 and have put more than 6,000 hrs. on it. It works great. However, I've stopped buying parts from our local Deere dealer due to their high cost. I can buy the same parts online for 40 to 60 percent less."

**Fred Guljas, Silver City, N.M.:** "I've been a professional mechanic for 31 years and the only product I've ever found that stops corrosion on battery terminals is Goo-It (ph 308 536-2618). I've used it for 14 years and it does everything the company says it will, keeping battery posts, cables, and battery hold-down hardware free of corrosion for years. You just put it on once and it lasts the life of the battery. I've even found it extends battery life by 2 or 3 years. Before I found Goo-It, I tried every other product out there, including sprays and even axle grease. Nothing worked."



**Luke Swartz, Bellefontaine, Ohio:** "About 20 years ago I bought a used Karcher 930C hot water pressure washer, which we use all the time in our shop. No problems. The hot water just peels the grease back and makes it disappear. This is a quality piece of equipment."

"My Thermal/Dynamic model 52 plasma cutter does a nice job of cutting steel, stainless steel, and aluminum. No complaints." (www.weldersupply.com; ph 800 236-8825).

"I've run about 2,500 lbs. of wire through my Lincoln 200 Power Mig wire welder, which I bought used. No problems."

**Olen Rowe, Washington Court House, Ohio:** "My 2013 Hoelscher CB 6 3-pt. mounted scraper, equipped with an optional hydraulic-controlled apron, has met all my expectations (www.hoelscherinc.com; ph 620 562-3575). I bought this 'dump bowl' scraper for digging waterways, filling in low places, and moving black loam soil onto eroded clay spots. The apron doubles as a gate that closes to keep dirt from falling out once the bowl is full. This option is a must when working in dry conditions."

"Last year I used the scraper to move more than 1,000 cu. yards of material. The hauls ranged from a few feet to more than 1/4 mile. This scraper is built heavy and does require a fair-sized tractor with 2 remote hydraulic outlets. I use a Deere 5085M, 70 pto hp, 2-WD tractor loaded with weights front and rear to pull it."

"I fill the bowl going about 1 mph, and at times the tractor's front wheels will lift off the ground. While the scraper comes with a 3-pt. hitch and a 50 hp maximum recommendation, I doubt many tractors

## CoolBot Controller Makes Jury-Rigged Cooler Work

When market gardener Mark Wittman spotted a walk-in cooler at a sale, he knew it was just what he and his wife needed for their start-up CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). Now in its second year, they were tired of carrying produce into and out of a cool basement and stuffing more temperature sensitive produce into their 2 refrigerators.

"We knew a walk-in cooler would make our job a whole lot easier," says Wittman. "We couldn't justify a new one, but the one at auction was cheap."

The pieces were panels of 3 1/2-in. insulation blown into 2 by 4-in. frames with steel cladding on the outside. Described as an 8 by 8-ft. cooler, it sold for only \$220. Wittman quickly discovered why.

"The pieces were actually for parts of 2 coolers that were slightly different heights," he recalls. "There were 4 panels from one cooler and 7 panels from a slightly shorter one. We ended up with 2 entrance doors between the 11 panels."

Wittman used 7 panels for sides and 2 for the roof. He fabricated corners from 2 by 4's and plywood and jury-rigged closures.

"The panels used an off-center latch system activated with a hex key that sent an arm out to grab the corresponding fixture and pull it tight," explains Wittman. "I mounted new edges on the off-size panels with bolts in place of the bars."

Wittman ended up with a slightly smaller than planned, 7 by 8-ft. cooler that he mounted to a freshly poured concrete slab. Cooling is provided by a used air conditioner and a CoolBot control system (Vol. 32, No. 5) that Wittman purchased on eBay. The CoolBot micro-controller constantly monitors the walk-in cooler and adjusts the A/C fan and compressors as needed to keep the cooler at the desired



Mark Wittman uses a CoolBot micro-controller to monitor his walk-in cooler. It adjusts an air conditioner fan and compressors as needed to keep the cooler at the desired temperature.



temperature without freezing up.

"It runs for about \$20 per month, which is not much more than the second refrigerator cost," says Wittman.

He estimates a total cost of \$1,200 including the CoolBot and concrete floor, which was the most costly part of the project.

"The cooler is a nice size for our operation and lets us store produce in the insulated coolers that we take back and forth to farmer's markets," says Wittman. "We end up with better quality merchandise and less work."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mark Wittman, Willmar, Minn. (mark@underthecottonwood.net) or Store It Cold (ph 888 871-5723; info@storeitcold.com; www.storeitcold.com).

meeting those specifications would have enough weight to load the unit in tough conditions."

**Phillip J. Hazen, Hackettstown, N.J.:** "In 1980 I bought a used Deere 4020 tractor with about 8,600 hrs. on it, and now it has more than 14,000 hrs. It's a great tractor."

**Allen S. Andrews, Gillett, Penn.:** Allen's impressed with closing wheel trash guards for Deere and other corn planters sold by Distel Grain Systems. (www.distelgrain.com; ph 507 665-6776). The guards are designed to keep rocks and trash from plugging up the closing wheels.

"I struggled for 40 years planting in our stony soil where the planter's closing wheels would often plug up with rocks. That caused the closing wheels to act like a plow and the seed ended up on top of the ground," says Allen. "Sometimes I wouldn't notice the problem until I had traveled 40 to 50 yards, and no corn would grow there."

"I used these closing wheel trash guards to plant 200 acres of corn last year with no plug-ups at all. They're easy to install and reasonably priced. A great product."

**Tom Demers, Bethlehem, Ct.:** A 1996 Ford F-350 pickup equipped with a Powerstroke diesel engine rates as Tom's "best buy". "I've put about 160,000 miles on this pickup. I use it to haul a 7,000-lb. pulling tractor and for many other jobs. I've replaced only the cam sensor and the radiator. I got \$200 more than book value when I sold this pickup. It still had the original exhaust system."

**David Hanson, Waseca, Minn.:** "I like my Deere 6430 tractor equipped with a 673

front-end loader. I use this tractor on my round baler. It has good power and handles well, with an excellent cab."

**David Burris, McLoud, Okla.:** "A lot of farm families live in rural areas where there's no internet service. We signed up with Hughes.net satellite broadband internet service, which turned out to be a mistake. Service is so slow I can't even Face Time without delay. It's supposed to work with Netflix, but it doesn't."

**Bo Pasturzak, Otway, Ohio:** "I've put more than 1,100 trouble-free hours on my Kioti 65 hp 4-WD loader tractor, which I use mostly for logging and sawmill work. It's a dependable workhorse. I use it with a 3-pt. mounted winch which saves time in the woods."

**Jody Boyles, Hamilton, Mich.:** "My 2010 Massey Ferguson 1529 loader tractor is easy to drive. I use it to till food plots and do bush hogging, and sometimes I hire out for loader work. I've taken on some pretty big jobs where I've been in the seat for 8 hrs. at a time, but it's a comfortable tractor to drive."

"The 2.9-liter, 4-cyl. engine on my 2008 Chevrolet Colorado pickup rattled any time it was started up cold. At about 50,000 miles the 'check engine' light came on. I took the pickup back to the dealer, but he said everything was fine. Only one month was left on the warranty and the 'check engine' light was still on. I ended up making 4 trips to the dealer, and finally he installed a new timing chain. Now I don't know if I should get rid of the pickup, or keep it and hope for the best."