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first or second pull after sitting all winter. It's powerful and tough, especially with the Beaver blade."

**Wesley L. Miller, Mauston, Wis.:** Wesley nominates **Dish TV** as a worst buy. "Last May, a salesman told me I would get a \$500 prepaid card for switching to Dish. I've called them twice about the card. In September, I called again, and they needed more information. After several more calls, they finally sent a \$300 gift card. It seems they aren't very honest and don't keep their promises."

**Tom Harris, Edwardsburg, Mich.:** "FARM SHOW is a consistent best buy. I look forward to receiving each issue."



**Curtis Burcham, Guntown, Miss.:** "I recommend my **Echo Timberwolf CS-590** chainsaw to anyone. It starts easily and will work as long as you can go."

**Melvin Martin, Williamsburg, Penn.:** "I'm fortunate to have several best buys. Our **Makita** 18-volt power tools have held up well. We bought our first kits in 2009 and are still using some today. They keep going and going.

"Our **Kubota** RTV 1140 2-seater just goes and goes with minimal problems. We took off the back seat and extended the bed front so we could haul 8-ft. posts and tools for our fencing business. We put the wire unroller on the front.

"Our **Mustang** skid loaders are really tough and have performed well. We have a 2000 model 2070 and a 2005 model 2076. They have excellent engines and hydraulic systems. The 2070 has an Isuzu engine, and the 2076 has a Cummins engine. I would recommend them to anyone.

"Our 2010 **Toyota** Sienna minivan has over 310,000 miles. We've never touched the engine or transmission other than servicing them. Last fall, we drove 8,300 miles on a trip without any trouble. I wouldn't be afraid to do it again. They're outstanding vans.

"My final best buy is our **Kubota** ZD25 25-hp., 60-in. zero-turn lawn mower. It has excellent traction and can mow a lot of yard quickly. My wife loves mowing the yard with this machine."

**Lon D. Stretesky, Big Springs, Neb.:** "I bought a **Jeep** Wagoneer in 2022. I thought it was what we wanted because it seats eight. It rides nice and gets good gas mileage, but issues started immediately. We primarily drive on gravel roads, and dust gets behind the sensors for the lights that tell you someone is passing. I may have found a way to fix the problem by going through a car wash that sprays underneath.

"My **Case IH** Magnum tractor has a big problem. It won't run at full speed even though the throttle lever is all the way forward. I called the tech guy at my dealer, and he told me that nobody at Case knew how to fix it. My tractor is a 2017, but I was told that all Magnums have the problem."

**Phyllis Visser, Herington, Kan.:** "In 2022, the first year they were built again, I purchased a **Ford** Maverick. It's the XLT, the mid-range style. I love this truck. I have

17,000 miles on it with not one problem. The gas mileage is great. On the road, I get around 28 mpg. In town, it's a little less. The bed is big enough to hold just about anything I want to haul."

**Terry Hill, Ceresco, Mich.:** "In 2004, we bought a 1966 **Deere** 2020 gasoline tractor with a JD 47 loader for \$3,500. It had a few issues, which were taken care of, and it served us almost daily for the next 10 years. In 2015, we had it overhauled at our local JD dealer. \$15,000 later, we'd pretty much taken care of any worn or questionable part on the tractor. It's well-engineered and built. It's easy to work on, and parts are readily available through Deere or aftermarket sources. It starts quickly in any weather. It has plenty of power for its size and is pretty easy on fuel. We've had a trouble-free, dependable workhorse for feed grinding, haying, and any other needed jobs. It suits us so well that we bought a second one with the same model loader while it was being overhauled. With normal use and servicing, I believe these tractors will still be useful 50 years from now. It's like a Timex."

Terry was disappointed with **Amtrak** on a sleeper service West Coast trip in March 2022. "We missed a connection in Los Angeles for the next leg of our trip up the California coast due to being 3 hrs. late. We learned a lesson—don't schedule a same-day connection when traveling by rail, even though the Amtrak agent who booked our trip assured us that our train would arrive on time. The Southwest Chief crew told us en route that they were rarely on time (maybe 2 to 3 percent). We were put on a bus and sent to Bakersfield to catch a Caltrans train there for the balance of our trip to Oakland."

**Shy Bishop, Bliss, Idaho:** "I've been happy with my **Harbor Freight** Hercules power tools. Because I needed to take my tools to the problem instead of dragging them from the field into my shop, I bought a wide selection of battery-powered 20V Hercules power tools. The construction and heft of the tools is very reassuring. All the batteries have an onboard fuel level gauge. The 7 1/4-in. circular saw does things easier and faster than the other, smaller-sized circular saws can't handle.

"My only disappointment with the Hercules tools has been the paddle trigger 5-in. grinder. It has an overpowered internal brake that stops the rotating wheel so rapidly that the spinning grinder wheel spins itself off. No matter how much I tighten the grinding wheel, I can't keep it on the tool when I release the trigger."

**John Carlsen, Princeton, B.C.:** "I'm pleased with my **Danby** 18,000 Btu heat pump from Costco. It was easy for me and my wife to install. I bought it mainly as auxiliary heat to supplement my wood stove. Instead of using 4 1/2 cords of wood, I use under two cords and have air conditioning in the summer. Operating costs me \$1.25 per hour, but I save \$300 in wood and stay cool all summer.

"My worst buy is a 2005 **Dodge** 3500 Cummins diesel. It cost \$30,000 to keep it on the road, and the engine packed it in at 348,000 km (216,240 mi.). Parts were expensive. If I wanted to use it in the winter, I needed at least a 4-hr. lead time to plug it in. I bought a gasser. Now, no plugging it in and no diesel spilled in my shoe filling it up."

**Rayne Tanner, Regina, Sask.:** Rayne has mixed feelings about **DeWalt** power tools and batteries. "In the last few years, our family has bought several DeWalt 20V MAX tools, including a grinder, 3/4-in. drive impact, 1/2-in. drive electric ratchet and several drills. All of them have worked flawlessly. The batteries have a much better



Finding comfortable and durable knee pads that stay in place can be a challenge.

## Knee Pad Best Buy

**Jim Ruen, La Crescent, Minn.:** "With arthritis in my knees, spending much time on the ground or other hard surfaces is a literal pain. Wearing knee pads, and I've tried more than a few, is a pain, too. They fall off even before the Velcro-style straps with stretch. Moving around on them inevitably means they get rubbed off.

"None of those things are true with my **Husky Gel Soft Cap** knee pads. At around \$50, they were a steal. The 3-point knee harness with actual buckles keeps them in place, even as I scramble across wood chip-covered areas. On hard surfaces, they're

equally secure. Even if they get a little out of place, slipping them back is easy. The 3-way straps make it easy to get the knee pads snug yet remain flexible.

"The comfort they provide is almost as important to me as staying in place. The inner gel layer is kind to my arthritis, and the molded foam around the edges helps with both secure positioning and protection. The rigid foam outer layer means I don't feel even the sharpest rocks or other objects.

"The Husky knee pads are definitely a best buy. They're available at Home Depot and Amazon."

run time compared to others. The best of these tools all have brushless motors, which work better and last longer.

"All DeWalt 18V power tools I have owned and fixed have inferior batteries. Even the Chinese equivalents worked better. The electric motors inside the tools eventually create arcing due to poor brush design."

**Henk de Jong, Fordwich, Ontario:** An **Outback Guidance** Auto Steer rates as Henk's best buy. "I bought this over 3 years ago. It's very easy to operate. I appreciate that a person doesn't have to concentrate on keeping the right line your tractor is working."

**Harry Tavori, Fort Myers, Fla.:** "I bought a used **Toro** lawn mower for \$2 at an auction. It runs like it's brand new."

Harry has become dissatisfied with **L.L.Bean**. "They used to have a lifetime satisfaction guarantee, but now it's only 1 year. They charge much more than other retailers. I won't buy anything from them again."

**Ronald Grzywacz Sr., Royersford, Penn.:** "My **DeWalt** hand-held 20V pruner worked much better than expected. It cuts smoothly with no ragged edges and can handle thicker branches. It can cut 4 hrs. on a charge. With several hundred fruit trees and shrubs to prune in the spring, this definitely sped up the process. Another quality tool from DeWalt."

**Jim Weaver, Oregon City, Ore.:** "About 3 years ago, I purchased a new **Husqvarna** YTH18542 42-in. riding mower. It's been the best small riding mower I've ever owned, and I've owned several. It starts every time on the first or second engine rotation. It has a setting on the key that allows easy backing up. There are several spots on my lawn where I use that backup feature, and it rolls reasonably fast in the backup mode. I love the manual blade engagement."

Jim can't give such a glowing review for his **Google** Pixel phone. "The battery life is terrible, and it's never worked right. At least once a day, I can be heard saying, 'I hate this phone.'"

**Betty Lou Barrett, Kimberley, B.C.:** "My 2024 **Noise Master** car stethoscope has five leads you can hook anywhere you think you might have a noise but cannot pinpoint the problem. The leads are directed to the control where the LED lights indicate which lead has the most noise. It's cheap and it works.

"I've been disappointed with the batteries for my quad and heavy equipment. The quad batteries, in particular, don't last very long. The equipment batteries used to last 4 to 5 years, but now they barely make it to the warranty time."

**Jay E. Wulff, Council Bluffs, Iowa:** "My best buy is a **DeWalt** 60-volt head unit for a string trimmer. I use it with several attachments, including a string trimmer, pole saw, tiller, and power rake. It'll use all the attachments my old Ryobi gas whacker had. It works like a gas-powered unit but is much easier to start. I'll never go back to a gas unit."

**Robert Veneman, Modesto, Calif.:** Robert is the satisfied owner of a **Heybike** electric bike. "Our place is too big to walk around on foot, but getting in a pickup, starting it, and driving 500 yards gets tedious. My sister talked me into an electric bike, so I bought the cheapest one. It's no mechanical marvel, but it's perfect for jumping on and off. It's really fast to get around. I mounted a box on the back to put tools and more for projects. I like it. It's perfect for me."

On the negative side are **Polaris** electric side-by-sides. "I have five of them, and they're simply junk. They're put together so cheaply that they're constantly falling apart, one screw at a time. We don't dare bring them in for repair because the bill is staggering to fix these things. The lead batteries are good for a couple of years, and then it's \$2,800 for new ones, so we went to lithium. That works better, but we're still plagued with failing switches, relays, and connectors."

**George Weller, Stanstead, Quebec:** "My **Toyota** RAV4 'plug-in' hybrid is a best buy. Some weeks, even with many short trips, it uses no gas. We took a trip of over 400 miles and used only about 4 gals. of gas."