

John Kramer, Hamlin, Iowa: “My DeWalt chain saw runs a long time on a 5-amp battery. I like that there’s no gas to mix. I use it on the farm all the time.”

“I’m glad I bought the higher-end 60-in. Gravelly mower. It has a very comfortable seat and mows great.”

Flint B. Harrison, Crossville, Tenn.: “In 1981, I bought a 1961 Ford and rebuilt the motor. It’s been a daily driver for over 25 years with general maintenance, and there are no computer problems to worry about. It was dependable and easy to work on and maintain. It was destroyed in a barn fire, or I’d be driving it today.”

Flint is unhappy with health, auto and home insurance. “You never know if they’ll pay you, how much they’ll pay you, or when they’ll pay you.”

Butch Grover, Bernardston, Mass.: Butch likes his 80V Greenworks chainsaw. “This little saw is the handiest tool we have for fixing fence. It’ll cut a 2-ft. oak off a fence. My daughters use it in their Christmas decoration business. It’s a great tool.”

Kale Warren, Bolivar, Mo.: “One of my best purchases was a Cub Cadet SLT 1550 lawn mower with a Kohler Courage 25 engine. The only thing I’ve had to replace was the starter. Soon after my brother and I bought the machine, we added semi lights and air horns. I use it to pull a Craftsman lawn sweeper and a Cub Cadet lawn trailer. Overall, it’s a very good machine.”

“On the not-so-good side, around 2021, my grandpa bought a Deere 8310R to do large fieldwork on his farm. The tractor was decked out in monitors and computers. Several times, my grandma would use the tractor, and it would beep at her because she didn’t release the clutch perfectly and would send a message to Deere. The worst part was the repair costs. Sometimes, the cost would be over \$10,000 to have it fixed. We sold it and replaced it with a more reliable Deere 9200. Deere needs to make its computers more user-friendly. No more new Deeres for us.”

Tommy Sanson Jr., Red Wing, Minn.: “My 2006 Chevy HD2500 4-WD with an 8.1 big block engine is a very good truck. It gets 12 to 14 mpg, has tons of power, and pulls anything. I’ve replaced tires and plugs and done routine maintenance. At 270,000 miles, I had to fix the transfer case, which was expensive.”

“I also have a 1998 Chevy K 1500 extended cab short box truck. It has about 415,000 miles and has no rust. Tune-ups, plug replacements and regular maintenance have kept my truck running well and getting 18 to 20 mpg. Take care of your rigs so they can take care of you.”

“I regret buying my Craftsman 1/4-in., 3/8-in. and 1/2-in. ratchets. They’re from 2020 and newer. I experienced gear failure with all of them during various projects, such as when trying to take ATV lug nuts with the 1/2-in. or trying to take out a 2002 Jetta oil drain plug. Stanley tools are much better.”

William Nadeau, Warren, Maine: “My 2023 GE Profile combination washer/dryer saves space and eliminates the dryer vent. It also frees up a 220V circuit. So far so good.”

David J. Schlosser, Edgeley, N.D.: David is a fan of Milwaukee battery-powered tools. “I’ve purchased several, and the power and life of the batteries is fantastic. They stand behind their tools. One standout is their grease gun. I like the settings on the gun (choose the number of pumps or continuous). The hose holster is nice, too.”

David’s experience with his Skil 4 1/2-in. battery-operated angle grinder has been negative. “You’re lucky to get 4 to 5 min. of

grinding before the battery is done.”

John Gorczyca, Pardeeville, Wis.: “My best tractor is my 2006 Kubota L3130 with a Kubota 513 loader. It’s such a versatile workhorse. I use it just about every day.”

Jim Corcoran, Sagle, Idaho: “My DeWalt 6 1/2-in. circular saw (model DCS393) is a best buy. It’s handy for all small jobs with light, smooth cutting.”

Cliff L. Fivecoat, Emmett, Idaho: Cliff’s 2003 Deere 6420 has many problems, making it a worst buy. “The engine intermittently misses. I turn the key off and restart the tractor. Sometimes, it runs; other times, I must repeat the process.”

“At about 1,200 rpm, the steering column shakes so much that it loosens the windshield bolts. The Deere dealer has worked on this tractor numerous times in the field and once had it in the shop for a week. They can’t find a problem; they say the shaking problem is because of the tires. I’ve had three different sets of tires, including one set of radials, and it still shakes.”

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Tim Coonrod, Carlinville, Ill.: “My Makita 7 1/4-in. corded circular saw (model 5007F) is my best buy. I’m pleased with this replacement for my old power saw, which quit. It’s a very well-built, heavy-duty saw that’s balanced and cuts well. I use it all the time.”

Tim hasn’t had a good experience with conversion adapters for DeWalt 18 and 20-volt batteries. “They don’t fit well with new 20-volt batteries and don’t hold a charge very long. The adapter units don’t always fit 18-volt battery tools.”

Bernice Keutzer, Arlington, Ill.: “The battery on my EGO string trimmer lasts as long as I do, even going through the tall stuff.”

Stanley Whittle, Elkader, Iowa: “I really like Milwaukee cordless tools. My pole saw was so handy that I bought a top-handle chainsaw that uses the same battery. I have a high-compression oil/gas chainsaw, but I have arthritis and starting it can be painful.”

“Keeping a chainsaw running when cutting brush is a hassle and dangerous. You cut some and walk 20 to 30 ft. to cut more. With a battery-powered saw, you can shut it down and start it up with the push of a button.”

“About 3 years ago, I bought an electric ratchet. It uses a little M18 battery that’s only 2 in. long but lasts all day. I love the thing, and if I’m doing anything in the shop, I keep the ratchet right there.”

“I bought a cordless caulking gun when I was putting siding on my house. It worked great. My son rebuilds cars and will take a windshield out of a salvaged car to put in one he is working on. He borrowed my caulking gun to use with windshield glue. It’s a learning experience with a cordless caulking gun, but it’s great once you get used to it.”

“I’m sold on cordless equipment. When my son’s weed eater wouldn’t start, he was going to get it repaired. I told him to buy an electric one instead.”

Dan Fitzsimmons, Good Thunder, Minn.: Dan is impressed with his Precision 20/20 SeedSense Gen 2 monitor with

Best Buy Wood Burner

Tom Hohl, Duluth, Minn.: “The HeatMaster G4000 EPA-certified gasifier outdoor wood boiler I installed 2 years ago is more efficient and better at heating my home than the conventional outdoor wood boiler I had before. That unit produced smoke and large amounts of ash and burned a lot of wood.”

“With the G4000, I burn about 40 percent less wood for the same amount of heat for my two-story house, which is about 3,200 sq. ft. I can burn low Btu aspen but need to mix in hardwoods like ash, maple or birch to maintain a coal bed, which is necessary to reignite the fire when there’s demand for heat in the house.”

“The G4000 produces little to no smoke, just steam, because of the almost complete combustion of the firewood. It has a large firebox with a nozzle in the bottom where smoke and unburned gasses are drawn down and into the combustion chamber. Most of the gasses and unburned material are incinerated at about 2000 degrees.”

“An internal circulating pump mixes the boiler fluid to help maintain a uniform temperature. I installed a Bell and Gossett pump to move fluid into the house, where a heat exchanger transfers the heat to my baseboard heating system.”

“The G4000 is computerized, so I can adjust the control dampers to deliver the right amount of air to the firebox and combustion chamber for peak efficiency. It also has an oxygen sensor that measures oxygen in the exhaust. Mine is set at 4 percent, which gives me a very efficient burn.”

“HeatMaster has three suggested settings for the control dampers and oxygen. Because of the wood I’m burning, my settings are different. I determined what worked best with the help of a HeatMaster Facebook group, which has excellent moderators. I also got help from the HeatMaster territory manager for the Midwest U.S. and Northwest Ontario. A knowledgeable HeatMaster dealer can also help with settings.”

“Maintenance for this boiler isn’t difficult. The fan is easy to take out and clean. I do that monthly. There should only be ash on the blades, not creosote. If you have creosote, your settings may be wrong. I clean ashes from the combustion chamber every 7 to 10 days. After the heating season, I clean the entire unit inside and out. Cleaning the two control dampers and lubricating them with automatic transmission fluid is easy with directions from a YouTube video by Marty

RowFlow. “I installed this on my 1998 Kinze Econo Fold 12-row planter 3 years ago. It’s worked better than any planter monitor I’ve ever been around. With the hydraulic drive, I can vary the population on the go and run individual row clutches for each row. This accounts for a lot of savings from not overplanting on point rows.”

Joe Hanson, Aberdeen, S.D.: “My best buy is my Toro TimeCutter zero-turn mower with a mulcher kit. I haven’t bagged lawn clippings for 35 years. This mower mulches grass very well unless there’s too much growth. It mulches leaves into the lawn in the fall with no leftovers, unlike anything I’ve used before.”

“However, I was disappointed with the ordering experience of my 34-in. TimeCutter. I ordered my mower in the spring of 2021 and received it on Nov. 30, 2021. The deposit was almost 1/3 of the original price. The price was \$500 more when it arrived than the original invoice. My choices were to pay that price or have my deposit returned. I paid it, but I’ve never had an experience like that before.”



Hohl’s “best buy” Heatmaster G4000 outdoor wood boiler sits on an insulated cement pad.

Lappin. Two side panels where the fan blows air to fuel the fire must be removed and cleaned. This is best done when the boiler is still warm.

“The boiler is well built and made out of titanium-enhanced stainless steel that resists corrosion, transfers heat better, and withstands high temperatures in the firebox. I like that the boiler has sprayed on insulation, which is much better than fiberglass at retaining heat.”

“I had electric power and excellent underground piping to my house, so I didn’t have to install that. There’s a significant tax credit for EPA-certified boilers, which includes labor. My unit will pay for itself in 3 years.”

“My unit sits on a concrete pad with foam insulation under it and on the sides to prevent the pad or boiler from moving. The boiler provides excellent heat even when temperatures are well below zero.”

“To anyone interested in a gasifier boiler like this, I recommend always using dry wood and pieces split 4 to no more than 6 in. in diameter. Don’t overfill the firebox because that creates more ash and doesn’t burn as efficiently. I usually fill the chamber just a few inches above the door sill with about 3 in. of coals and ash in the bottom of the firebox. On nights colder than -10 F, I’ll add more wood, primarily hardwood.”

Connor Bishop, Conn.: “After wasting money on a Parmak charger, I bought a cheap plastic solar fence charger from **Tractor Supply**. It’s been working fine all year and has an adjustable angle for the solar panel to adjust for the seasons.”

“My Parmak solar fence charger only worked for about 2 mos. before it failed. I needed to send it in for service at my cost, and during the 6 weeks it took to repair, the deer ate my fruit trees that the fence charger was supposed to keep out. After I got it back, it still didn’t work properly. It’s a \$300 paperweight.”

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Mark Miller, Belvidere, Tenn.: “I’m having problems with my Chevy 2500 HD. The computers they make these days are