

"Owner's Report" On Best, Worst Chain Saws

Are you satisfied with your chain saw? How could it be improved? What accessories have you bought for it? Do you do anything with it besides cutting wood?

These are some of the questions we asked randomly selected chain saw owners in an effort to highlight those chain saws that perform with flying colors, and to pinpoint the "lemons" that fail because of poor performance or failure of the dealer or company to provide service.

Here's how the survey shaped up:

"I've replaced 8 chains, 3 bars and two spark plugs," says Arnold Siefker, Sibley, Mont., pleased with his 1977 Craftsman chainsaw. "It still starts good and cuts four or five pickup loads of wood a year as well as cleaning out brush from fence rows. I sharpen the chain myself with a Craftsman sharpening kit."

Jerry Weaver, Bethany, N.Y., owns a 1982 Husqvarna 61. "I've replaced the chain twice but everything else is still original. It has plenty of power and cuts well. I sharpen it myself with a Gamm sharpening kit that's got a hand-operated burr and a jig that fits on the bar. If I were in the market for a new saw I'd buy another Husqvarna."

"My 1986 Echo 610EVL always starts on the first pull and has plenty of power. No problems," says John Agnic, Butler, Penn. "I sharpen it with a hand chainsaw file."

Todd A. Allio, Tionesta, Penn., likes his 1993 Stihl 039 equipped with a 20-in. bar. "It's a good all-around saw. We use it for cutting firewood and do some logging for our own use. It's easy to start and has plenty of power. We also had an 041 Stihl we bought in the late '70's and we ran it until 1993 when we bought the 039. I'd recommend this saw to anyone. In addition to wood, I've used it to cut wrapped silage bales with good results."

"I'm satisfied with our 1985 Deere 50V but it has a balance problem. When you set it down on its base while idling it will roll over to the bar side. Deere stopped making saws so parts availability is poor," says Junior Summers, Bruceton, Mills.

"I own two 15-year-old Homelite 45's because I learned a long time ago that if you want to saw wood, don't ever go to the woods with one saw. If you have two, you can hopefully get one to run long enough to do some good," says Wesley Jones, Jonesboro, Texas. "Starting is a problem with these saws and the adjustment on the chain is tedious. If I were buying new saws, I'd buy Stihl because they seem to start and run better."

"It's the best chainsaw I've ever owned," says Larry Martin, Maple Grove, Minn., pleased with his 1993 Husqvarna 262 XP. "It starts on the first pull and stays running. I sharpen it myself with a 12-volt sharpener."

"I sharpen my 1980 Homelite XL myself using a rat-tail file. I put the file in a 1/4-in. electric drill and it only takes a few minutes to sharpen the chain. It works great," says Chester Klockenbrink, Philo, Ill.

"I don't know of anything I would want different," says Robert E. Haessig, Madison, Wis., about his 1990 Homelite Super Eze. "It's easy to handle and does an excellent job."

"I hope newer saws are at least as good as these 20-year-old saws," says Dan Venhuizen, Arlington, Minn., who owns two 1975 Homelite saws - a Super XL 925 and Super 2. "Both have stood up to heavy use. We make 8 to 10 cords of firewood a year, and also for trimming and brush cutting. I sharpen the saws myself. After more

than 30 years experience with saws, I've learned to see by the angle of the cutting teeth whether it'll make chips or dust."

Leander Maus, Albany, Minn., likes his Stihl 032AV. "It always starts for me and has required little maintenance. I'd buy another one because of outstanding reliability."

"Our 1992 McCulloch Titan starts easy, has plenty of power and cuts easy," says Robert Mleziva, Luxemburg, Wis. "It needs a compression release on it. My wife can't start it."

"I use a Martex chainsaw sharpener that hooks onto the chain bar with a 4-in. stone and uses an electric drill for power. The chain lasts longer and cuts better than when filed by hand," says Douglas Sawyer, Weston, Ontario. "I fitted our 1988 Husqvarna 61 with an adaptor bar to trim hedges. Worked good. This saw has no vibration and cuts as good or better than any other make I've used. One problem is that the brake trigger cuts in too quickly. The chain breaker clutch wears out too quickly."

Jim Link, Conklin, Mich., likes his 1993 Husqvarna 51 chainsaw. "It starts easy and cuts fast. It's lightweight for its size, making it easy to operate and doesn't vibrate like some of the other saws I owned. I sharpen it myself with an Oregon bench grinder."

Charles L. Dostal, Prague, Okla. likes his 1994 Jonsered 625 and 20.45 models. "Both are lightweight, well balanced, powerful, and don't vibrate. They're the fastest cutting saws I've ever owned. I wouldn't trade them for any other brand. In addition to wood, we use them to cut holes in stock ponds. However, the roller nose chain bars don't last long and require more maintenance than hard nose bars, especially when used on cedar or oak trees that are embedded with dirt. I wish they didn't have recessed fuel and oil fill holes. It takes extra time to clean around the caps before servicing."

"I'm satisfied with my Italian-made 1992 Alpina P-34," says Randy Kirk, Watrous, Sask. "It's sturdy and reliable and starts after four pulls every time, even when it hasn't been used for a while. It's also easy to service, powerful, and maintains rpm's very well. I like the full metal case. However, the chain needs to be improved. It gets dull fairly quickly and seems to stretch easily. I sharpen it myself with a rat-tailed file and a sharpening guide. If I were in the market for a new saw I'd buy another Alpina."

"It has excellent power and is well-balanced," says Donald A. Hill, Newport, Maine, pleased with his 1986 Husqvarna 266. "It starts good in warm weather but needs about 8 pulls in cold weather. I've used it for rough cutting in of windows and doors. It also works excellent for cutting ice fishing holes. I sharpen it myself with a hand file."

"I'm well satisfied with my 1989 Pou-lans Countervibe equipped with an 18-in. bar," says Tom Stanley, Gillette, Wyo. "It

doesn't vibrate and is a joy to use. It starts every time and the carburetor doesn't need constant adjustment. The only problem is that it's too heavy. Also, I wish it had a better manual oiler. The automatic oiler is inadequate when cutting large trees and the manual oiler doesn't put out enough oil either. I sharpen the saw myself about half the time using a guide. I once used my saw to cut the bead out of an old tractor tire that I made into a sandbox. You have to be careful, though, because the saw kicked a lot."

"I've owned eight Homelite chainsaws over the years beginning with the XL-12 about 25 years ago," says Roy A. Tate, Sunflower, Miss. "I currently have three models - the latest Model XL12 model, the 330, and the small XL model that's equipped with a 12-in. bar. The old XL12 was a good saw, but the new models are junk. They have sloppy fitting parts, won't maintain adjustments, are hard to start, leak fluid, and have plastic that cracks. I've used my chain-

sharpen my saw by hand five or six times, then have it machine sharpened."

Ray Winniski, Dauphin, Manitoba, is generally satisfied with his Partner 500 equipped with an 18-in. bar but says it could use a few improvements. "The engine has plenty of power and purrs like a kitten. It's lightweight and easy to handle. I've never had any trouble with it. I'm on the third bar and have probably gone through six chains. The only time it was in the shop was to replace the clutch bearing. The sprocket used with the second bar wore out fast, probably because the dealer mismatched the sprocket and chain bar. There's too much plastic on the saw and it cracks or chips in cold weather. Metal is more durable and looks better after a few years of use and has better trade-in value."

Peter Nowakowsky, Nestow, Alberta, is only moderately satisfied with his Stihl 024. "The high idle control on the choke is difficult to use. I hate it with a passion. I've also had a few mechanical problems with this saw. I use my older Stihl 020 for most cutting chores. It has a lot of hours on it but still runs well and has an easy-to-use manual choke. It's lightweight, safe, and powerful. I put the bar in a vise to sharpen it. I count the strokes I make with the file to keep the chain running as evenly as possible."

"My 1992 McCulloch works great," says Paul Kovarik, Fort Atkinson, Iowa. "Starts easy, is lightweight, easy to handle, and has plenty of power."

"I'm completely satisfied with our 1974 Stihl 031," says Doug Yoder, Haven, Kan. "We've used it hard through the years. I've often thought about trading it in for a new one, but I've never been able to justify such a move considering the faithful and reliable service this saw continues to provide. I hope the company keeps making its new saws as good as my 20-year-old ones. I sometimes use a hand file or a 12-volt battery-operated grinder to sharpen it. However, I find it more convenient to let my dealer take care of all the sharpening. He does a better job than I can. I keep several sharpened chains on hand. I've used my saw to cut through round hay bales. It works good if I take the cover off the drive sprocket (having retightened the chain bar). You have to be careful, though, without a shield on."

"New models have sloppy fitting parts, are hard to start, and leak fluid."

saws to cut truck and tractor tires into feed-bunks. It works better than any other method I've tried."

D.L. Schwamberger, Brookston, Ind., is generally satisfied with his Echo 650 EVL. "It has plenty of power and generally starts and runs good. However, I wish it had a manual oiler and was better balanced."

"I've had very little trouble with my 1986 Sachs-Dolmar 110 except for the gas line and rubber mounts. The gas line is made from plastic and cracked. A new rubber line solved the problem. The saw is lightweight, has plenty of power, and doesn't vibrate much," says Alan Stein, Farina, Ill.

"I'm satisfied with my 1982 Stihl 032," says Larry G. Hughes, Lexington, Ind. "I tried several other brands before I bought it, but now I wouldn't buy anything else. It always starts no matter how cold it is or how long since it's been used. No complaints. I

Chain Saw Holder Lets You Run Saw With One Hand

New chain saw holder clamps easily to any bench. Allows saw to pivot up and down for one-handed use, leaving your other hand free to hold the wood.

A deluxe model allows you to hold the saw rigid in a vertical position to rip logs - creates a "poor man's" sawmill - or in a horizontal position to trim logs.

Two models available. The "Crosscut" (\$90) is for fixed 90° cutting of firewood, fence posts, framing, etc. It simply allows the saw to pivot up and down.

The "Multicut" (\$175) lets you adjust the saw to cut all angles and miters. Locks vertically to rip-cut boards. An additional accessory (\$45) is available to mill logs.

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