



Gift box: With Christmas approaching, it is all the excuse we need to round up some "cool tools". It may be worth leaving the magazine open on this page in a prominent position.

Cool tools make great gifts

In the lead-up to Christmas, we like to have a scout around some of our favourite tool stores to see what's new and interesting. By **Josh Giumelli** with photos by **Ben White**

Nothing says get in the workshop and fix something quite like a new set of spanners, sockets or screwdrivers. All jokes aside, new and innovative tools hit the market all the time, and it can be tough staying abreast of the latest and greatest gear.

Most farms would not function without a well-equipped workshop. But on the other hand, the battered tool box carried from job to job out in the paddock can be just as crucial when the pressure is on to patch things up and keep machinery operating.

This selection of tools is often quite carefully considered, as any superfluous items just take up space and add weight to any portable toolboxes.

You just have to walk around any agricultural field day in Australia to realise how many different ways there are of making the latest and greatest super-spanner, all of which promise to replace a vast proportion of your current tools with a single item.

In reality, most of us have little time for gimmickry, but the more reputable tool

manufacturers have certainly improved the design of some tools such as multi-grips, locking pliers and ratchet spanners over recent years. Any tool which can be relied upon to tackle a range of jobs is a sure-fire toolbox favourite.

While this article is not a direct endorsement for any particular brand or type of tool, we have used many of these over the past few years in our own workshop.

**All tools sourced from Toolmart
All prices include GST**



Back in June's workshop we looked at installing battery terminals using a hydraulic crimping tool. This Matson unit handles lug ends from four to 70mm² and costs \$100.



There are a plethora of different style tool belts on the market but we were a bit taken by this Australian-made Black Angus pouch, which looks ideal for fencing. It is all leather, including a sturdy belt, and seems good value at \$87.



This Stanley tool bag looks ideal for fencing gear, with plenty of room for the strainers and lots of pockets for smaller items. Not cheap at \$100 but it seems well made.



You can't have too many lifting slings, and it pays to replace them every now and again. They are a lot cheaper than many people realise. The grey four tonne, 2m loop (effective length) is \$23.50 and the 3t, 3m loop is \$26.50. Make sure you buy at least two of each size to get the most out of them.



Many of us probably have old, rusty blunt files clogging up our toolboxes. Bahco make good quality files, and this five-piece set is great value at \$56.50.



All sorts of items get pressed into service as gasket scrapers, but this set will surely find a home in any toolbox for \$28.50.



Most of us probably have a tubeless tyre plug kit in the workshop, but this compact set is just the thing to throw in the glovebox or under the seat for \$40. Never use cheap plastic-handled repair tools as they have been known to split, sending the metal needle through the user's hand. Cord-style plugs are strictly a temporary repair, so it pays to have a professional insert a plug at the next opportunity.



Removing a battery terminal when welding on a vehicle or machine can be a pain. This Antizap surge protector simply clips across the terminals on your battery and lets you get to work quicker with the welder. It costs \$50.



Anyone who values quality hand tools will treasure a Dawn bench vice. This 100mm engineer's vice costs \$189, but you will have it for life. A 125mm version costs \$400.



Knipex gear is some of the best quality tools you can own. While there are many gimmicks on the market attempting to improve upon the shifting spanner or adjustable grippers, the compound action of the jaws in these grippers provides incredible gripping force, and open to 85mm. Use them on pipe or hydraulic fittings, or even large nuts and bolts. At \$330 for the 400mm pliers wrench, we wouldn't want to be lending them to anyone. A 250mm version costs \$129 and a 180mm unit is \$119.



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If you balk at the price of the Knipex grippers, there are other cheaper options. The standard, traditional grippers (right) are huge at 480mm, and cost \$155. The 405mm Irwin GrooveLock pliers on the left are incredibly useful thanks to the fine-toothed jaw adjustment, which is effected by pressing the silver button and sliding the jaws in or out. Good value at \$90, or only \$30 for the 300mm pair.



Here is the Knipex version, which has a similar operating principle. Both the Irwin and Knipex tools have jaws which can effectively grip bolt heads as well as pipe fittings. The 300mm Knipex pair costs \$123.



Any tool which cops a large amount of punishment needs to be good quality, and these Sidchrome cold chisels fit the bill. Poor quality cold chisels don't hold an edge, and can sometimes fracture, sending dangerous shards of metal into the hands or other body parts. Expensive at \$212 but worth the money in our opinion.



The same goes for his combination set of Sidchrome pin and centre punches. There are many cheaper sets than this (\$140) but probably none that match the longevity of these tools.



There is nothing more frustrating when trying to repair something, and coming up against a so-called "tamper-proof" screw. These two sets of Kinchrome Torx-style keys fold up pocket-knife style, and sure beat the annoying sets of individual bits which invariably get lost. Prices are \$34.50 for the hollow Torx keys and \$28.95 for the solid keys.



Alternatively, these short-leg keys are compact enough for most toolboxes, and the colour-coding will help avoid confusion. From left to right, hollow Torx keys, solid Torx keys, imperial and metric hex keys, all \$38.50 each. Great stocking fillers.



While we are on the subject of hex keys, these jumbo-size Allen keys will find a ready home in any set of tools at \$112 each. Metric sizes from 2mm to 19mm, and imperial sizes from 5/64" to 3/4".



In July we reviewed the only two battery-powered 3/4" drive impact wrenches on the market. Here is a set of 29 impact sockets to suit, covering sizes from 19mm to 65mm. It is expensive at \$733, but to put it in perspective, the single 50mm socket used in our testing cost \$50.



This compressed air-powered gun (\$59.50) can both blow and suck, and is just the thing for a quick spruce up of the tractor or harvester cab if you don't have a shop vacuum cleaner.



At first glance this looks like an ordinary box cutter, but it is actually a carpenter's pencil, with a graphite core instead of a blade. Possibly a bit of a gimmick, and it may not handle being dropped too often, but a good stocking filler at \$6.95.



If you are looking for a great value portable set of tools, it is hard to go past this Sidchrome set at \$286. It includes 1/4 and 1/2" drive sockets in both metric and imperial, as well as two sets of combination spanners (up to 19mm in metric and 3/4" in imperial), a set of screwdrivers and an adjustable spanner. The toolbox is a great size to carry around, and easily fits in the footwell of a ute. It is also a great set to give to a younger person looking to build up a quality set of tools to help out on the farm.