

Oxblood Lily

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Oxblood Lily, *Rhodophiala bifida*, provides an exciting burst of color in early September following a heavy August or September rain. Very refreshing after the heat of summer has taken a toll on summer blooming plants. This bulb has brilliant red blooms on foot tall stems. They resemble small red amaryllis and, in fact, are in that family.

Oxblood lily is well adapted to about all soil types and is considered a tough, resilient plant. It has been in Texas at old home sites since the early 20th century when it was brought to Texas by German settlers. It can be hard to find and would be considered a good pass along plant. (check online mail order sources).



Ideally, divide and share oxblood lilies after the foliage dies back. However, it doesn't really hurt them to divide anytime. Plant the bulbs about 6"-8" apart and about 3" deep. They can be left in place for years without dividing and still keep blooming.

Oxblood lily blooms in sun or partial shade under deciduous trees. For the best effect, plant the bulbs in large drifts. The Ft Worth Botanical Garden has a stunning display in a lawn close to several live oak trees. Against a green backdrop like this or an all-green garden it provides that "Wow" affect you cannot ignore. In my own setting, I've planted a drift in part of the lawn where it meets the woodland edge. Dormancy of the grass in winter and little or no fertilizer to this area in spring makes it easy not to prematurely mow before the bulb foliage starts turning yellow.