

## CHIMERAS: MY FAVORITE MUTANT!

By Jim Boyer

Tampa African Violet Society



A chimera, very simply, is a genetic mutation. During new growth, for whatever reason, the genetic material in a normal African Violet doesn't combine. Instead, part of the genetic material wraps around the other part of the genetic material and they do not join. Consequently half the genetic material controls half the plant and the other genetic material controls the other half of the plant.

This creates several consequences. The blooms are striped. There is a distinct center stripe and 2 distinct side stripes (see the pictures below). Also, the plant is sterile and will not produce viable seed. Additionally, the plant cannot be propagated from a leaf cutting. Propagation can only occur from suckers that occur on the chimera or from the bloom stalk itself. There is an excellent article in the January/February 2007 AVSA magazine titled "Chimera Secrets Update" by Neil Lipson that goes into detail about propagating chimeras. They may be mutants, but they are still African Violets and should be grown the same way as any other African Violet. (<http://avsa.org/node/104>)

There are other consequences you need to be aware of. The AVSA data base has over 17,000 listed African Violets. Of that number about 600 are chimeras. They are rare and hard to propagate so they will cost more. And, chimeras can be unstable and can revert. Considering the cost this can be very frustrating.

Regardless, I love them. They're my favorite mutant! If you have questions I can be contacted at the email address below.

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