

The Phoenix according to Pliny (2)

In the southern parts of the world, the dates known as "syagri hold the highest rank, and next after them those that are called "margarides." These last are short, white, and round, and bear a stronger resemblance to grapes than to dates; for which reason it is that they have received their name, in consequence of their close resemblance to "margaritæ," or pearls. It is said that there is only one tree that bears them, and that in the locality known as Chora. The same is the case also with the tree that bears the syagri. We have heard a wonderful story too, relative to this last tree, to the effect that it dies and comes to life again in a similar manner to the phoenix, which, it is generally thought, has borrowed its name from the palm-tree, in consequence of this peculiarity; at the moment that I am writing this, that tree is still bearing fruit.

Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, XIII chap 9-10 translation John Bostock, H.T. Riley, courtesy of the Perseus Collection