Stain removing

In the **1960s**, my mother (who did the stain removing) did not use branded products. A key aspect of stain removal in these days was to know what stains could be boiled out and which would be fixed by boiling. She was a big believer in **carbon tet** as she called it, which came from the **pharmacy in a clear glass bottle with ridges on one side of it to show it was a poison, it was quite a large bottle, perhaps 10 fl oz**. As everyone did in these days, she used **methylated spirits for grass stains** (and ballpoint marks). This came from the **ironmonger in a similar bottle** to the carbon tet, with similar ridges. As far as I am aware she did not use benzene or petrol for stains. She used **oxalic acid for iron stains and was proud of the fact she knew this. It came from the pharmacy in a small brown bottle with poison on the label** but no ridges. You put the acid on the stain then poured warm (not hot) water over it. By the 1970s she knew it would be increasingly hard to get hold of, I don’t know if the pharmacist told her this, but I guess he did. If the stain was on a white fabric, bleach or hydrogen peroxide would be used as long as it was a “suitable” stain. I guess borax may have also been tried as my mother used it to clean the refrigerator. Similarly acetone and turpentine substitute would have been used when necessary. As I recall we started to buy branded products for stain removal around 1975/1980. By that time “biological” washing powders had rendered stain removal less important and dry cleaning had become more affordable. I think we **probably bought Thawpit when it became impossible to get carbon tet**. (The composition of Thawpit has changed over the years by the way.) But my mother never thought it was as good. I have found a booklet for a cream called **K2R** from around 1970, but I think we only used it once or twice. I think **Vanish soap** first appeared around this time. Then we got **Stain Devils** for specific stains, but they never worked very well and **declined in power over the years as the contents became less “chemical”**. I have a very vague recollection of carbon disulphide being used (horrid smell!) early on, but I could be wrong.

My father did not use chemicals in the garden very much, except for **sulphate of ammonia and sulphate of iron (ferrous sulphate) regularly for the lawn** which was his pride and joy. I think he may have used **Bordeaux mixture** (copper sulphate and lime) on the peach tree but only **occasionally**. I recall lime being used more generally on the soil as well but only rarely. I am sure he did use various branded pesticides from time to time and by the 1970s, branded lawn products as well. But I cannot recall their names, except **I am sure we did not use DDT (rarely used domestically in the UK) and we did use Paraquat**. My mother was very fond of a hormone-based rooting powder produced by M&B called Strike, I still have it!

The key thing in both cases is that they **stopped using unbranded chemicals in the** **1970s**, mainly I think because they became unavailable as I don’t think either of them would have bothered with branded chemicals otherwise.

[why did she think the oxalic acid knowledge was something especially to be proud of? It has been included in household manuals and magazines for a long time -