Final Preparations for Closing Up Your Florida Winter Home

Prepare Your House to Leave for the Summer - Before you Lock Up and Drive Off . . .

1. Unplug the appliances, entertainment units, computers -- everything. The lightning from our summer storms can wreak havoc with electrical equipment.
2. Leave large buckets or tubs of water in each room for moisture.
3. Set the thermostat if you'll be leaving the A/C on. How to decide? Some people turn off the A/C completely, which is not recommended. Some leave it on but at a high temperature, like 80 or 85. Your decision here has to do with the items being left in the house. Is there artwork that you don't want to dry out in the heat? Does your security system only work at a particular temperature? Do you leave your wine collection in the house?
4. If you have natural gas, turn off the gas at the main valve.
5. Flush all toilets and run all faucets.
6. Turn off the water to the house at the main valve. Drain any remaining water from the faucets, long shower head extensions and such.
7. Turn off ceiling fans.
8. Leave all the interior doors open so the air can circulate inside the house.
9. Close all the blinds and drapes to keep as much heat out of the house as possible.
10. Have candles? Store them in the refrigerator (if you are leaving it on) or put them in the coolest, darkest part of the house.
11. If you use call forwarding on your land line, now is the time to remember to set it.
12. Open the doors to the washer and dryer, the dishwasher, and any other appliance that typically seals up.
13. Unplug the garage door opener.
14. Turn the water heater off.
15. Ask a trusted neighbor to stop at the house periodically to check for leaks inside and out, walk the house, visit after storm activity to check for damage, etc. Give them a key to check inside of the house also. Give the neighbor your cell phone number in case of an emergency.
16. Have your irrigation system set up to go off twice a week to water your lawn and shrubs.
17. Notify post office to forward your mail. Notify newspaper to stop delivery for a specified time.
18. Take all movable objects (lawn furniture, planters, lawn ornaments) inside to avoid them being blown around during strong winds.

Some people leave for 3 months and some leave for 6 months. Our homes, systems and issues are all different. Some of the items in these checklists might not apply to your house, and there may be other items that you'll need on your checklist that other people don't have to consider.
I recommend that you use this information to create your own personal and permanent checklist. Add contact names and numbers. Hopefully you will have the preparation down to a science after a year or two, and you can be worry-free about your Florida home while you spend the summer up North.